

THE MUSTARD TREE



THE STORY OF MENNONITE
BRETHREN MISSIONS

by Phyllis Martens

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Phyllis Martens

Maps by

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INTRODUCTION

The mustard tree in Jesus' parables grew from an insignificant seed to a large bush with diverse shape, hardly recognizable in comparison to the seed.

Mennonite Brethren missions have grown from witnessing to neighbors in Russia to a force of missionaries scattered throughout many countries and churches of varying degrees of maturity and strength planted along rivers, deserts and in cities. The program has changed shape as it grew and is flexible, moving, changing today.

Phyllis Martens has written to recapture both the growth and changes that have occurred over the years since 1889 when the first missionaries were sent from Russia to India. Her intention has not been to glamorize but to tell the realistic story of victories and frustrations, progress and retreats, opportunities utilized and hesitant waiting.

Many people have given time and effort to make this book possible. Missionaries, visitors to other countries, nationals studying or visiting in the United States and missionary office staff members have all added their share.

The vision for this book originated with Elmo Warkentin. The Board of Missions/Services sponsored the writing and Office of Christian Education, Fresno supervised publication under counsel from the Board of Christian Literature.

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." Acts 1:8

This book is intended for us in

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|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| --Service Training classes | --new member classes |
| --mid-week study groups | --Sunday school electives |
| --women's groups | --personal reading and study |

Loyal Martin
November 1, 1971

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Chapter 1

BEGINNINGS

Missions in the Mennonite Brethren Church was not an after-thought. It was the very seedbed in which the Church germinated. As J. J. Toews aptly observes, "It is not so much that the Mennonite Brethren Church gave birth to the missionary spirit but rather...that the missionary spirit contributed to the origin of the Mennonite Brethren Church."¹

Religious life in the Russian Mennonite colonies had grown cold, and social life corrupt. The fresh winds of evangelism, however, began to blow in from Europe; Moravian influence and literature, missionary writings from Germany, men of God like Edward Wuest and Tobias Voth. A small group of persons responded with new faith and zeal, and then broke away from the formal church to form the Mennonite Brethren Church. Missions was born with the church; for the new group began immediately to bring the gospel to friends in the colonies and also to Russian friends and household servants--a dangerous move since the state law forbade proselytizing. In twelve years the membership of the infant church grew to 600.

By 1889 the young church had missionaries to send abroad: the Abram Friesens. Since the church had as yet no organized mission, the Friesens went to serve in the Baptist field in Nalgonda, India, among the Telegus--a move which was to determine the future field of the Mennonite Brethren in India. Education and medical work began, and other missionaries were sent out. By 1910 the Indian church had 3,000 members. Then in 1914 war disrupted communications between the home church and the missionaries. When the Revolution destroyed the homes and property of Russian Christians, the Baptists graciously lent money to support their missionaries and in the end took over the field altogether.

The mission story now shifted focus to America. The immigrants who fled from Russia in the 1870's and settled in American midwest decided to accept the confession of

faith of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Russia, and immediately continued the missions interest interrupted there. Money was collected for the Russian missionaries at Nalgonda and for two Indian evangelists.

But "pocketbook" foreign missions did not satisfy the constituency. Young people soon began insisting on going out themselves. Because the Mennonite Brethren had neither a seminary nor definite plans for mission work, the young people trained at Baptist schools and went out under Baptist societies. The Baptists thus helped the Mennonite Brethren greatly in their early mission efforts: But it became apparent that only a strong independent work would properly capture the Mennonite Brethren mission spirit.

A small beginning was made in American Indian territory when in 1894 the Kohfelds set up a station at Post Oak, near Lawton, Oklahoma, among the Comanche Indians.

Two years later the Conference made its historic decision to take the initiative in missions. The Conference voted to 1) reorganize its mission administration, and 2) recruit its own missionaries.

The first move to provide training occurred when Mennonite Brethren teachers took charge of the Bible department in McPherson College, Kansas. Tabor College was built in 1906. A German periodical, Zionsbote, was already in circulation and could communicate mission news.

The logical choice for a foreign field was India among the Telegus, the area where the Russian Mennonite Brethren had been working. To this place four missionaries were sent in 1899: Rev. and Mrs. N. N. Hiebert, Elizabeth Neufeld, and Anna Suderman. These were the first names on the roster of Mennonite Brethren foreign missionaries--a list which rapidly grew longer as the brethren at home cast their eyes upon different parts of the world.

Work in India had just begun when the Conference started to hear about another work, this time in China. The H. C. Bartels had been working independently in north China since 1901 and came to America to seek support and personnel from the Mennonite Brethren. With

2,000 villages and over 1,000,000 people in India to be responsible for, as well as Post Oak Mission, the Conference drew back.

But there was to be no drawing back. The people of the churches became interested in China, and several others went out as independent missionaries. The F. J. Wienses set up work in southern China, hoping that the Conference could hold back no longer, and the South China field was officially added to the mission program.

One problem solved brought another in its wake. The same Conference that accepted the China field heard the unexpected request from A. A. Janzen that the Mennonite Brethren support their hitherto independent work in Belgian Congo. The request was answered courteously, but in view of already heavy commitments, support was not granted. The request was shelved for a number of years by the Conference--but not by the people. As it had been for China, interest was aroused, and more missionaries went out independently. H. G. Bartsch began to work in Kafumba, supported by a local Mennonite Brethren mission organization in Canada. The struggle now intensified, with a split in mission interest threatening if the Conference did not soon take up the Africa work. Delay had compounded the problem, since there were now two fields in operation--one in Kafumba and another in Bololo. In 1939 the Conference at last took official action to consider the work; and in 1943 the responsibility for both fields was accepted.

Meanwhile the mission in China was in trouble. Revolution and the communist takeover so seriously interrupted the work that by 1951 all missionaries had left.

As China disappeared from the mission picture, however, another continent began to appear: South America. The colonies of Mennonites who had settled in Paraguay and Brazil were already evangelizing among nationals and Indians. The Mission Board sent a man to survey Colombia for possible work. By 1945 both Brazil and Colombia were accepted fields.

Japan. Germany-Austria. Panama. There was no stopping place. The initial outreach now touches four continents, and foreign missions is the largest single

enterprise of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

Today's Outlook

In April, 1971, Mennonite Brethren leaders met in Fresno, California for a seminar to discuss the present state of our missions as well as future strategy. The Board of Missions and Services secretary, Vernon Wiebe, pointed out that missions has basically four steps:

1. Scattering the Word
2. Teaching converts
3. Forming a church
4. Entrusting this church to God and leaving it.

We are now at steps three and four, he said. The 1970's will be spent trying to sort out the relationship between the older, sending church and the young churches who want autonomy.

This new relationship, said Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary president, J. B. Toews, involves two major questions. The first is a question of role: where does initiative originate, in the sending church or young church? Where is the center of responsibility for evangelism--with the mission or the new, often very small, national church? What role does the missionary have? It is secondly a question of method: is the national church the only base of operations, or does the mission have another, simultaneous program? What media are most effective--mass media or the local church program?

As these and other questions were argued back and forth it became apparent that there were no easy answers, that persons in different countries and in different roles had different answers, that the missions situation was far too complex to apply the same answers in all places. There can be no one "cut-and-dried" mission strategy, said Vernon Wiebe: it is this "creative tension" in which we make progress.

Some patterns did emerge:

- The national churches are definitely becoming autonomous and wish to take their full place in the church at large.
- The missionary role is changing drastically. The missionary may once again operate at grass-roots level as evangelist or church planter, perhaps for a life term; or he may be called in by the local church as an expert or professional for short-term assistance.
- In most places the emphasis is less on "national" or "foreigner" doing a work, and more on the life and spiritual vitality of the worker. The church actually needs to cross boundaries of color and culture, said Mr. Wiebe, for such interchange has power.

If we are indeed in a missions revolution, how far and how fast must we change? Mr. Wiebe said again, there is time to do what needs to be done; we need not become jumpy but can move ahead with "all deliberate speed." There is an optimum speed beyond which we begin to work against ourselves. "This is the mood of the churches," added William Neufeld, Executive Secretary for Pacific District of Mennonite Brethren Churches, "to move with certainty under a calm, wise leadership."

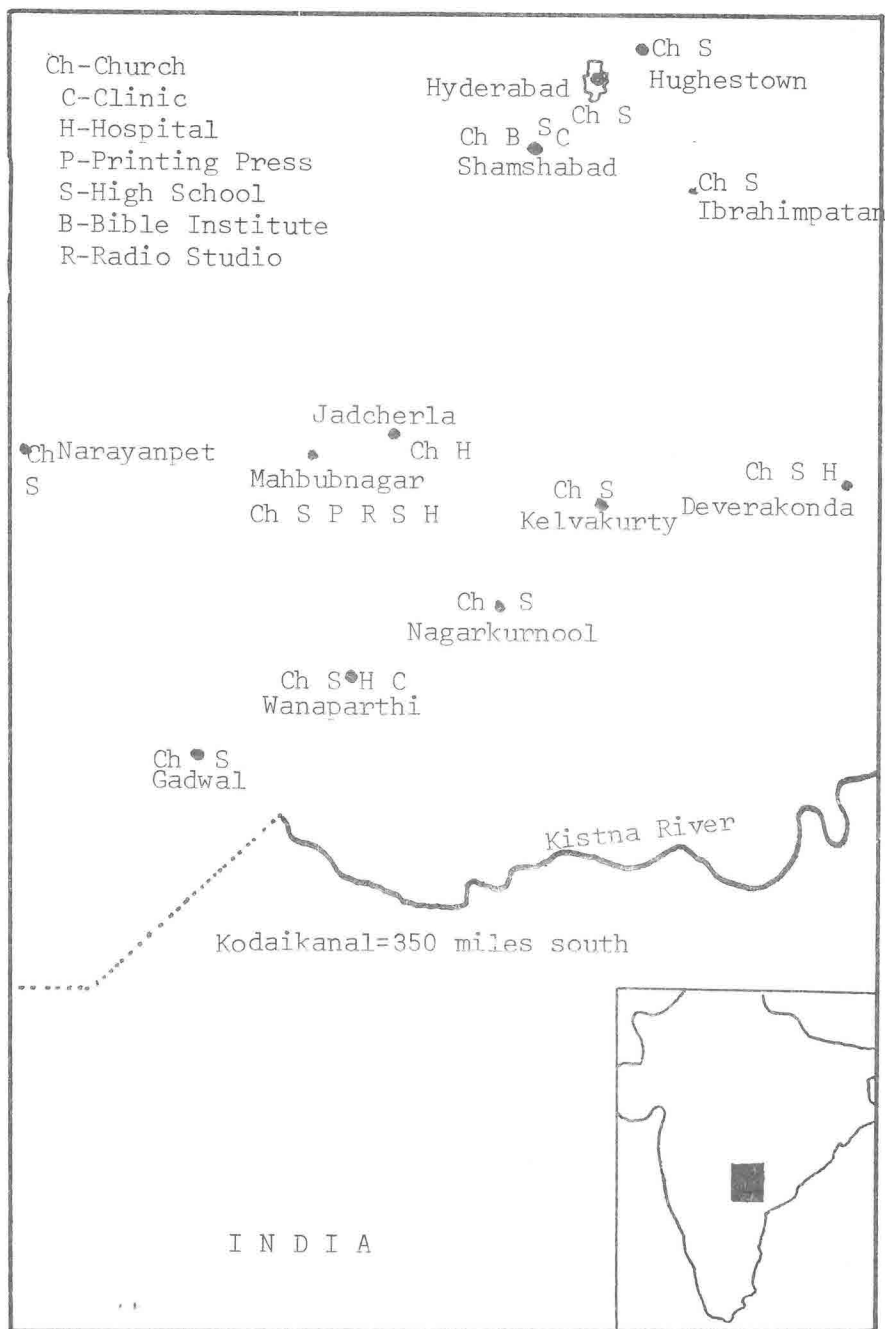
"We are in a time of missions revolution more far-reaching than the Reformation." J. B. Toews.

"This is no longer the day of foreign missions; this is the day of the church." Vernon Wiebe.

Missions is finally the work of God. In times of almost bewildering change, we might remember the words of the old hymn:

The feet that wait for God
are soonest at the goal.

¹A. J. Klassen (ed.), The Church In Mission (Fresno, Calif.: Board of Christian Literature, 1967), pp. 134-5.



Chapter 2

INDIA: THE GREAT TRANSITION

"When I leave home, I am a man of the 20th century; but when I return, I belong to the 16th century." So said a young man in India not long ago.

Across ancient India, land of many gods, has swept a strong wind of modern Western culture. But though the wind brought changes, it could not blow down all the old landmarks. The young Indian now has to adjust his life to an India both medieval and modern, both eastern and western. The centuries-old caste system, for example, has been declared illegal, but in practice it still exists. Textile mills and steel complexes bring the bustle of modern industry to the cities; but out in his field the farmer still winnows his grain by tossing it into the air. Radio broadcasts reach remote villages, and TV via satellite is just around the corner; but 70% of the voting population have not learned to read. The land of the lotus flower and the holy man has now to contend with its population explosion and, itself a democracy, with an aggressive communist China crowding down from the north.

In the midst of all this, the church. The Mennonite Brethren Church in the state of Andhra Pradesh has had to come of age. It has had no choice but to mature, for several reasons. First of all, the old mission methods of the early 1900's have ceased to be sufficient for a new era. Then too, the methods of a foreign-based mission are no longer adequate for the needs of an expanding national church: for the work which began with four missionaries in a rented house has become in 1971 a fellowship of 20,000 Christians with their own leaders, needs and purposes. Finally, the country of India itself demands that her people be self-directed and independent.

The story of the church in India has until now been two-sided. In part it has been the story of the North American missionary, of his methods and policies. In part it has been the story of the Indian people, how they viewed missionary and message, and in what manner

they responded. Today the emphasis has shifted from the foreign missionary to the national or indigenous church--so much so that by 1972 the era of the permanent missionary will have been phased out and the story of the church in India will belong almost completely to the Indian brethren. To understand this shift we must begin the mission story at its beginning.

ARRIVAL

On the hot, dry plains of central-south India live forty million Telegus. Their villages of mud-walled houses are scattered haphazardly among a patchwork of rice, peanut and millet fields. Women stand ankle-deep in the mud of the flooded rice fields, stooping to transplant by hand their bunches of green shoots. Ox-carts with dozing drivers jolt slowly along the rutted roads which wind around field and village. The stony hills are crowned by Hindu temples or the ruins of ancient fortresses. The flat sandy plains are bisected by the Krishna River, on its way to the Bay of Bengal; and by main highways and railroads bound for Hyderabad City.

Hyderabad, a city of over a million people, was in the past the capital of the state of Hyderabad, ruled by the Nizam--a fabulously wealthy Moslem monarch controlling a predominantly Hindu state. Today Hyderabad is the capital of the modern state of Andhra Pradesh.

The plains shimmer in a dry unbroken heat during much of the year. The monsoons from June to September bring in the cooler season and the rains on which the farmers depend. Failure of the monsoons means drought, shortage of food, and often severe famines. Government irrigation projects have helped somewhat but the problem remains acute. A missionary wrote:

We hope that the Lord will again bless India with rains so that people do not need to suffer so. Just the other day a preacher and his wife were here. Both were sick. The wife had fever and the husband is absolutely emaciated due to lack of food. . . . When one of the missionaries put some money into his hands he burst into tears. . . . Some of the

preachers have children who earn money and help them but this couple has no one and it looks like they are slowly starving to death.¹

This letter was written, not in the 1920's, but in March of 1970.

The Telegus are attractive brown-skinned people of slender build. They have a musical language, an ancient culture, and a complex social structure. So intricate is the caste system that even the smallest village is a complicated web of social interchange between artisans, merchants, laborers and landlords. The Brahmins, or highest caste, are well educated and philosophical. The dominant religion of the people is Hinduism, which combines a highly involved philosophy and social system with a localized worship of gods and goddesses by offerings and sometimes blood sacrifices. A village proverb states that Hinduism has 330,000,000 gods.

When the first Mennonite Brethren missionaries arrived in 1899, they found a sprinkling of missions already at work in the Telegu area--Baptists, Lutherans, Church of England, and others. However in the large territory south of Hyderabad City only the Baptists were working. Unable to cover the field themselves, they gave over part of it to the Mennonite Brethren--an area 100 miles by 120 miles, with a million and a half people.

The N. N. Hieberts, arriving in October, 1899, with Miss Elizabeth Neufeld, thought it best to rent a place at Hughestown, a suburb of Hyderabad City. To their great disappointment the Hieberts had to return home because of bad health after only eighteen months. Miss Neufeld stayed on to open a school for children, gathering her first class together under a large shade tree. Later the children met in a mud house; a load of sand was dumped on the shady side to write in, because there were no paper and pencils. Anna Suderman (later Mrs. D. F. Bergthold), who had joined the group, worked with the women and the sick.

When the J. H. Pankratzes came in 1902 and began looking for a station, they heard about a Mohammedan who wanted to sell property to pay for his son's

wedding. After the price had been agreed upon and a loan arranged, the Pankratzes bought the first mission property in India: in Mulkapet, another suburb of Hyderabad. But the Mohammedan community became incensed when several years later several Mohammedans were publicly baptized. They objected angrily to a Christian mission so close to their mosque and demanded that the government drive the foreigners out. To stop the disturbance the government bought the property and gave the missionaries permission to buy elsewhere, provided their station not be near a mosque or Hindu temple. The next purchase was Hughestown, across the street from the house the Hieberts had originally rented.

But Hughestown was swampy, and everyone began to come down with malaria. In time the swamps were drained and the station became usable; but in the meantime Rev. Pankratz set out for the third time to look for a mission site. He found one at Shamshabad, a small village near Hyderabad City with a higher elevation and therefore a better climate.

During this time the D. F. Bergtholds had obtained a government permit to work at Nagarkurnool, eighty miles from the city. The J. H. Voths built up a station at Deverakonda, where a Telegu Christian named Wankayalapetty Jacob had already won many of his friends to Christ.

The Rajah or king of Wanaparty, then a tiny independent kingdom, requested that the mission begin work in his village. He not only gave land and buildings but offered the Frank Jantzens his guest house to live in while construction went on. He sent his own craftsmen to do decorative work on the mission house, so that it became the most beautiful residence on the whole field.

Kalvakurty had no resident mission workers for some years, but unknown to anyone, its missionaries were on the way. Escaping from persecution in Russia, the J. J. Dicks and their small daughter were following a tortuous route across China and over the Himalaya Mountains by foot and horseback, into India. They had hoped to go to relatives in Canada; but seeing the

mission work, they decided to stay and work in Kalvakurty.

In 1937 the American Baptist Telegu Mission found itself unable to maintain its extensive field and offered to the Mennonite Brethren several stations bordering the Mennonite Brethren field--Mahbubnagar and Gadwal, with buildings and congregations of Christians already existing.

Meanwhile an independent missionary, Mr. Billington, had worked for a life-time in an area bordering the Mennonite Brethren field to the west. His wife died; and Mr. Billington, now old and unwilling to see his work fall apart, offered the field to his neighbor mission without charge, asking only for a monthly pension. Thus Naryanpet-Mukthal, with 1200 square miles and 200,000 people, came to Mennonite Brethren responsibility in 1954. (Mr. Billington died unexpectedly only a few weeks after signing over the property.)

These nine stations, plus the Jadcherla medical complex, now comprise our India field.

At these stations the missionaries built residences, schools, churches, and hostels. Here in co-operation with the Mission Board in North America, were set the patterns and policies which until recently have guided the development of the India church.

EARLY METHODS

Many early missionaries put their energy, first and foremost, into pioneer evangelism, as the following reports indicate:

The Lohrenzes did a great deal of village evangelism and organized many literacy classes. . . .

Brother Voth was an indefatigable touring missionary. Walking or cycling he toured villages never before reached by any evangelist . . . he loved the people as his own.

The Unruhs were tireless in their work in the field--touring, preaching, admonishing.

The Pankratzes were essentially touring missionaries and spent much time in the villages.

Rev. Bergthold gained a fluency in the use of the Telegu language that very few foreign-born missionaries have equalled. He traveled in the vast Nagarkurnool field from village to village. . . . J. J. Dicks were both able people, out and out evangelistic workers.

The strongest point of J. N. C. Hiebert was evangelism. He was much liked by the Indian people as a preacher.²

These men spent many weeks each year going on tour--that is, traveling from village to village by oxcart, bicycle or car, crossing rivers and thorny fields, pitching a tent perhaps and holding services late into the night. P. V. Balzer wrote:

We take our touring wagon, which is a house trailer drawn by oxen, and go out for longer tours to the farthest ends of the field. We use a loudspeaker to give more people a chance to hear. . . . Even people who do not come to the meetings can hear from their own homes as they sit at their doors in the cool of the evenings.³

The vision of yet more unreached villages was compelling. But to men burdened by the administration of a station and by the daily difficulties of obtaining food, building materials, car repairs and the like, these methods of evangelism could be wearily slow. Someone remarked:

It is believed by some busy westerners that since people and travel are so slow in India, the missionary also has leisure to go about slowly with his daily duties. The opposite is true. With everyone else going so slowly he has to work double time to get anywhere. . . . Even with a car it is impossible to visit all of the two or three hundred villages assigned to one missionary in one year. If a brother has two fields, what shall he say then?⁴

And so a second mission pattern became increasingly important: reliance on nationals. J. H. Lohrenz said, "The native evangelist preacher, who is faithful and true to his Lord, holds the key to successful evangelism in rural India."⁵ He himself put this principle to work by training national brethren to teach his literacy

classes. By any means possible--personal example, special Bible studies, small schools of one kind or another--the missionaries tried to bring their converts to sufficient maturity to assist in the work.

As the years went by, men of faith and high caliber were found on every station. Among those who served 35 years or more were J. Levi, V. Abraham, and V. L. Benjamin of Hughestown; K. John, T. Ezra and R. David of Nagarkurnool; G. Samuel and T. S. Rangiah of Deverakonda; G. John and M. Elisha of Wanaparty.⁶ The list is much longer. These preachers, evangelists, teachers and rural leaders became the backbone of the indigenous India church.

The medical missionaries also could not get along without assistants and proceeded to train their own. Mary Wall, for example, trained her helpers during forty years of hospital work. One of these was G. S. Paul, whose son, Dr. Sunder Paul, is now in charge of the Deverakonda hospital. Likewise at the Wanaparty hospital Margaret Suderman taught men like P. B. Isaac, who became not only a trained dispenser but an evangelist and church leader.

But a more organized training program seemed necessary to meet the many needs of the many people. Thus a third mission method came into being: building schools. Miss Neufeld's class for children became in time many schools--primary schools, middle schools (which offered three more grades than primary schools), and eventually high schools. By 1950 the primary schools were enrolling 2000 pupils, the middle schools 900, and the highschoools 200. In 1920 a Bible Institute was begun at Shamshabad, offering two and three-year courses. The higher theological training not available in Mennonite Brethren school could be obtained at Ramapatnam Baptist Seminary and at Yeotmal Union Seminary.

In the villages, children were gathered together to learn reading, writing, arithmetic and Bible. Adults unable to travel to established schools were offered various short-term reading and Bible courses in central locations.

Because of the difficulty of travel, children

attending school at the mission compounds were boarded in hostels. The children learned gardening, house-keeping, sewing, and the like, and became part of the church life of the compound. Hostel life in itself was a new experience for village children, as described here by Mildred Enns:

Boarding life is very simple. The children eat, sleep, sit and study on the floor. We have a cook who helps look after the meals. Otherwise the children do their own work. They are slow in their work but I have never yet had to get them out of bed in the morning. They get up early to carry water, pound grain, clean the grain and sweep the rooms. For breakfast they have porridge, for noon and evening meals they have cooked grain with curry. Peppers and vegetables are raised for their curry. Dishwashing is not so much work as in the homes of America. Each one has his own plate, some have a tin to drink out of, and that is all. Since the weather is so hot, the children need very little clothing. Expenses of school and boarding have been paid by mission funds and what little help the children contribute. The total expense per child per month is approximately \$1.55. Those who can, pay 44 cents of this in fees.

At eight in the morning they gather for chapel. How eager those faces are to hear the Word of God. I have prayed morning after morning: "Lord, give me a message."⁷

Assessing this type of mission school, J. H. Lohrenz said, "Though the method had its defects, the results have, in the main, been encouraging. These schools have been an asset in building up the indigenous church."⁸ One measure of the usefulness of the schools is the fact that by 1950 the Bible Institute alone had trained some 400 workers to send out into the field.

The congregations of believers--those on the mission stations, not those in rural villages--also began to adopt more formal patterns. It was natural that these churches on the mission compound, where the missionary lived, should become larger or "mother churches," and that patterns of worship and

administration should resemble those in America: a central church with pastor and deacons, Sunday school, young people's societies, central treasury, church discipline practiced by the congregation, mid-week services. To these forms the Indian people added an oriental type of preaching which combines song, recitation, and speech. They sang their Indian melodies in unison to the accompaniment of small drums, cymbals, and a harmonium or hand organ.

The village churches stayed closer to Indian patterns. As A. A. Unruh points out, "While churches in mission compounds and nearby centers have accepted the western administrative pattern, the village churches have a very distinct Indian culture and pattern in their administration as well as services."⁹ The people sat on the floor on mats. Services were held when the people could gather, generally Sunday evening. Leaders were chosen according to the Indian principle of recognizing natural leaders, not by democratic election. This distinction between city and village churches still holds true.

The medical work kept pace with schools and churches. India has to cope with leprosy, malaria, bubonic plague, cholera, typhoid, ulcers, parasites, and a multitude of skin and eye diseases--the kind of diseases of which Tom Dooley once said, writing from Laos, "These are the 15th-century diseases, and we get them all the time, every day."¹⁰ Epidemics spread quickly in crowded villages, among people already suffering from malnutrition.

To cope with the unending stream of villagers, the missionaries built hospitals and clinics and put the single ladies in charge: Margaret Suderman in Wanaparty, Dr. Katherian Schellenberg in Shamshabad, Mary Wall in Deverakonda, Margaret Willems in Gadwal. Dr. Schellenberg was the only doctor to go to the field until 1952, when Dr. Jake Friesen arrived.

Even these buildings became crowded and outdated. A piece of land the mission had acquired at Jadcherla seemed an ideal spot for a large central hospital because it lay in the middle of the field, at the intersection of several highways and a railroad. The

beginning of the medical complex at Jadcherla is described by Anna Suderman:

One day in 1945, two days before Dr. Schellenberg died suddenly of a heart attack, she was walking with some missionaries across the vacant tract of land acquired by the M.B. Conference earlier. She was sharing with the others her vision of a large hospital complex on that empty space. Seven years later, in 1952, this vision began to take shape when Dr. Jake Friesens moved into the only small building there and started to build. In the past 18 years a large, well-equipped, 136-bed complex has sprung up as out of dry ground.¹¹

The fourth important institution, communications, began in a small way when D. F. Bergthold set up a small press in Nagarkurnool. The press was later transferred to Mahbubnagar, which is now the center of Mennonite Brethren literature work. The Telegu paper "Wuvarthamani" (Gospel Messenger) began monthly publication in 1920 under the management of J. H. Voth with editorial assistance from Indian brethren. A Telegu hymnal came out in 1934--words only, since Indian church music is not written down. Since then other hymnals, Sunday school materials, tens of thousands of tracts, Bible correspondence courses and other study materials have been published. Fortunately the Telegu Bible was already available through other missions. A two-volume work on faith and doctrine was written by J. H. Lohrenz. However for most larger works the mission depended on outside publishers, such as the Andhra Book Club and the All-India Book Club.

By the 1950's, then, the station-centered pattern of missions was well established. Within the walls of the mission compound, construction was under way: school buildings, church buildings, dispensaries, hostels, bungalows, kitchens, print shops, workers' living quarters. Many buildings were small and built of kiln-dried brick; others were large and permanently constructed of stone, with verandas and pillars. J. H. Lohrenz was especially noted for the fine architecture of the churches and residences he designed. In the gardens grew citrus trees, papaya trees, vegetables and

flowers. Indian schoolgirls in long skirts and well-oiled black braids walked down the paths of the compound or sat sewing in the shade of the neem trees. The boys studied, hoed their fields, and played noisy games of soccer. The cook, printer, dispensary aide, gardener, Bible teacher, and village evangelist met with the missionary to plan further work. The hub of all this activity was the missionary's office off the big veranda of the mission bungalow.

Missionary children went to school up in the hills, first to Ootacamund, a British school in the Nilgiri Hills, then to Kodaikanal, an interdenominational school in the hills south of Madras. In Kodai the mission bought property for a hostel of their own. To these beautiful resorts spots the missionaries also went for vacations and for mid-term visits with their children. Kodaikanal employed a few Mennonite Brethren teachers, housekeepers, and secretaries, who came out under the school board for terms of three or five years.

While the children were in school, the work on the plains went on. Churches, hospitals, schools, printing press. The money for most of these ventures came from North America--not by design, perhaps, but of necessity. Missionaries found the greatest response to the gospel among the harijans, or untouchables, and the people of low caste. The Mennonite Brethren mission therefore became a work among the poorest of the land, the illiterate and downtrodden. Believers had to struggle not only with great poverty but with social ostracism and with unbelieving landlords who could make it nearly impossible for them to earn a living. "The rural Christians are forced to depend on the favor of their non-Christian masters for their daily bread," wrote one of their leaders.¹² The national church therefore leaned heavily upon the mission for support of their leaders, for construction of their church buildings, for care of their children in the compound hostels.

The early missionaries were concerned about this problem of dependence, as P. V. Balzer points out in the following comment:

When missionaries first came to the field, they used

to send forth ox carts to gather up children, bring them to school, give them free clothing, board and tuition and pay all the teachers. As soon as an interest for education was aroused in the people . . . the help from the mission was withdrawn and children were sent to the schools paying their own way. This was done long before the conference in America moved to make the work self-supporting on the field. Similar efforts were made in self-support of the ministers of the Gospel providing them with opportunities to have occupations as tailoring, farming, leather tanning and other work as a means for self-support.¹³

The problem of self-support remained a knotty one, however; and it was not until much later that the churches were able to take decisive steps toward financing their own programs.

A TIME OF TRANSITION

Apart from the disturbances of World War II and the unrest during the civil wars between Hindu and Moslems when India was divided in 1947, the first fifty years of missions in India were years of relatively peaceful expansion. By 1950 affairs on the field appeared to be prospering:

The Telegu Mennonite Brethren Church numbered 13,000 members or more.

Twenty-two missionaries were on the field, others were on furlough.

About 250 Indian men worked as preachers, teachers, evangelists, assistants.

Some 60 churches had been organized.

Schools enrolled hundreds of students. The Bible School had produced some 400 workers.

Four hospitals and additional clinics served crowds of people.

The press was putting out Savarthamani, a major doctrinal work, and a multitude of lesser material.

Clearly the early patterns of missions had taken hold and had been effective.

But the times were changing. Like the monsoons blowing in from the sea, great storms of nationalistic feeling were rising, and with growing vehemence the people were demanding an India free from foreign influences. Within Hinduism itself such revival movements as Arya Samaj tried to stop the spread of Christianity as a foreigner's religion and sought to win converts back to Hinduism.

The great civil wars of 1949 swept into Hyderabad State. When the Nizam, a Moslem ruler, refused to surrender his independent state and join a Hindu Free India, the Indian armies marched in and took over the state, and a Hindu Telegu-speaking majority gained control. In 1956 Hyderabad State was further reorganized to conform to language grouping: a large Telegu-speaking area to the south was joined to it and the name changed to Andhra Pradesh.

Missionaries began to feel less than welcome in the 1960's, when the India government began a phased withdrawal of foreign personnel from the mission fields and other areas and restricted sharply the issuing of new visas. Why, asked government officials, should the Indian church depend on foreigners to run it? Why could it not produce its own leaders?

A foreign-run mission would soon cease to be in place in this new India. Only a national church would be acceptable to people and government. Both missionary and Mission Board recognized the necessity for changes in mission strategy.

The winds of change were blowing, not only across India and the Mennonite Brethren Mission, but across the whole world of missions. The basic philosophy of missions was undergoing scrutiny. Men like McGavern and Nida were taking a hard look at time-honored mission policy and method and were saying that colonialism and permanence must give way to autonomy for the national church and to flexibility in the missionary role. To quote anthropologist Paul Hiebert:

In general missions has been struggling with the shift away from a colonial framework in which there is the unilateral communication of the gospel by the west, which had assumed a culturally superior stance

and initiated action by itself, to a framework of mutual brotherhood. . . . A second shift has been to realize that as the gospel is transported to other lands it will take on different cultural forms. As Br. Murthi said, the Indians don't want a potted plant, they want the seed of the gospel to take root and grow in Indian soil.¹⁴

The Board of Missions and Services agreed that the Mennonite Brethren fields should be guided toward becoming indigenous, and that as quickly as possible. Policy for the India field changed accordingly. Perhaps the most conclusive decision was made in a meeting in May, 1970:

The Board at the May meeting came to the conclusion that the moment of truth should arrive in 1972 and all of our permanent missionaries would have been phased out of the program. The decision at that time was not to withdraw a financial and spiritual relationship, but to withdraw permanent workers and replace them with servants from North America who would go for shorter periods of time and at the request of the India Mennonite Brethren church.¹⁵

Out on the field, the idea of a self-directed national church was certainly not new. J. N. C. Hiebert had written years before, "The mission station is but the starting point and not the goal. It will disappear as soon as the missionary withdraws."¹⁶ The minutes of the 1944 missionary field conference stated:

There is a growing conviction that closer fellowship and cooperation should be effected between mission and church on the mission field. . . . The question was referred to the Reference Committee.¹⁷

The first real move toward self-government was the forming of Field Associations--the banding together of Christians on each of the (then) eight fields for fellowship and common effort. To this day, the annual informal conventions bind the village people together in a much-needed feeling of solidarity. The festival-style meetings with processions, testimonies, business sessions and worship services provide a good substitute for the Hindu festivals which Christians are asked no longer to attend (though because of pressure from

relatives or other reasons, many still do).

In 1946, a committee of 19 nationals and 6 missionaries accepted a constitution for a Field Council of the Andhra Mennonite Brethren (AMB) Church and the American Mennonite Brethren Mission. This Field Council was to be "as indigenous as possible," the Minutes said, and was actually a joint administrative body for all the Field Associations. In 1957 the Council had a ratio of 27 national brethren to 6 missionaries, and the name was changed to Governing Council. The Governing Council was registered with the government, so that the India church is now a registered body. It was to this Governing Council with its committees and boards that the mission institutions were later transferred.

Thus the India church was partially organized for transition. What it did not have was enough leaders and enough money.

When the urgency of the times made it apparent that, ready or not, the transfer of mission properties and institutions to the national church would have to begin, the following order was decided upon:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. the church | 3. radio and press |
| 2. the schools | 4. medical work |

India now became a test field for the Mennonite Brethren. Could this transition be made smoothly? Without setback?

1950'S: THE CHURCH

Because local church affairs lie closest to the daily lives of the people and in fact were already largely managed by them, this area was the first to be transferred to national leadership. The road to progress proved to be somewhat bumpy. A rather sudden cut in number of missionaries and in financial help for preachers forced the church leaders to make some difficult adjustments.¹⁸ The people, too, found themselves clinging to old ways. One leader said, "The church has not yet fully accepted native leadership. In many places it still looks to the missionary over the head of the local leader."¹⁹

But adjustments were made, and the church began to discover its own forward motion. Evangelist D. J. Arthur wrote,

The church in India is a reality. It has taken root. It is growing in confidence, maturity, and numbers. It can stand on its own for sure.²⁰

The 1970 Statistical Report published in Shamshabad sets the membership of the Andhra Mennonite Brethren Church at about 20,000. These members are scattered over 666 villages from Hyderabad in the north to Kurnool in the south, and from Nalgonda in the east to Yadgiri in the west. The present nine fields in order of membership count are Gadwal, Mahbubnagar, Deverakonda, Narayanpet, Nagarkurnool, Kalvakurthy, Wanaparthy, Hughestown, and Shamshabad.

A church must find its way according to its own time, its own place, and its own people. The Andhra Mennonite Brethren Church faces its own peculiar problems and responsibilities--both very great.

The Challenge Within

The work of nurturing twenty thousand believers scattered in hundreds of villages is staggering. Consider these facts from the 1970 Statistical Report:

- only 25% of the membership attends church regularly
- 95% have no Sunday school to attend
- the literacy rate for church members is 22%.
In some villages no Christians can read. In Medikonda, of 225 members only 2 can read the Bible.
- many village Christians confuse salvation with baptism, or connect baptism with marriage.
- in the past ten years the Mennonite Brethren church has suffered a heavy loss of members, some to other denominations and some back to Hinduism.

Hundreds of villages go without regular worship services for lack of leaders--pastors may have up to ten or fifteen villages under their care and find it impossible to hold regular meetings in each of them. In

order that at least some Bible teaching reach all the villages on a systematic basis, the fields are divided into circuits, usually six. The circuit leader is expected to visit all his villages at least several times a year; he may also be the pastor of one larger church. Annual field conventions are held in one village or another, and for many Christians this convention is the only time of inspiration they experience apart from their simple village meetings.

These village meetings are generally held Sunday night because most villagers are required by their employers to work in the fields on Sundays. At 8:30 or 9 p.m., after the mother returns from the field and prepares the evening meal, the Christians gather. Some fall asleep before the service is over. Since most are illiterate, the hymns and scripture and sermon are very simple. There is no Sunday school, though the leader's wife may teach the children on Sunday morning in lieu of a service. Evangelistic meetings are rare, communion services almost never conducted.

Peter Hamm says of these rural churches:

The degree of Christian maturity of these village Christians is hence closely determined by such factors as literacy, regularity of church attendance, whether or not there is a pastor or strong layman, and to what degree such a Christian worker has the ability and time to give training to these Christians.²¹

Larger churches fare somewhat better. The city churches in Hyderabad and Mahbubnagar, as well as churches on former mission stations or in large towns such as Ibrahimpatnam, Shadnagar, and Achampet, conduct a complete program of Sunday and mid-week services. The Sunday evening meeting between 4 and 5 p.m. is either a Christian Endeavor or a general prayer meeting. There are also ladies' meetings, communion services once a month, the annual harvest festival, special services at Christmas, New Year, and Easter, evangelistic or "deeper life" meetings, and perhaps some Bible studies. Yet even these churches must contend with factionalism arising from the social system, the democratic process, and related problems.

To cope with the problems of meager spiritual care, illiteracy, doctrinal confusion, and drifting away of church members, the India church needs resources: men, money, and (in a diminishing role) missionaries.

Men.--Despite all training programs, there are never enough leaders to go around. In 1963, for example, there were only 9 ordained and 34 unordained pastors for a community of 20,000 persons. By 1970 there were 125 preachers on the recognized list, of whom 26 were ordained; there are also capable laymen and recent Bible School students who have not yet made the "preacher's list" but who are invaluable as leaders. But the demand is still far greater than the supply.

Furthermore, as D. J. Arthur points out,²² the poorly educated local pastor has trouble winning the respect of educated laymen. He also feels incompetent to face the forces of resurgent non-Christian religions and of a heightened nationalism. If, as is usual, he is from the lower castes, he hesitates to visit the caste people for fear of persecution by the top men of the village.

Another real problem, Mr. Arthur says, is that there are almost no outstanding evangelists or theologians capable of leading a whole conference or a whole country.

A more encouraging word is given by educator Paul Hiebert:

From the Bible college course is coming a group of men and women who are taking the initiative in Bible teaching programs in our schools and hospitals. From the seminary are coming excellent conference leaders, men with as much Bible and secular training as those of us on the mission staff, men with as much dedication and sacrifice as our leaders anywhere.²³

And from Peter Hamm:

The Church has many leaders--simple, village Christians; dedicated, active laymen; experienced, capable leaders; and educated, youthful administrators.²⁴

The above statements suggest that today's leaders are coming from both the schools and the congregations--they

may be either trained men or natural lay leaders. This is true.

What a powerful influence a layman can exert is seen in the story of Dr. A. R. H. John, a medical doctor. In 1968 the Hindu village of Medikonda (named after two landmarks, a hill or "konda" and a Medi tree) saw the baptism of 136 people in one day. All 136 had been won by the witness of Dr. John and his wife. Another layman, P. B. Richard, a government worker in Hyderabad, is in charge of a small congregation five miles from his home; he meets all the spiritual needs of that group on Sundays and during the week. Peter Hamm remarks:

The importance of these unrecognized preachers cannot be overemphasized. . . . Perhaps the actual growth and nurture of the India Mennonite Brethren Church depends largely upon these Christian workers . . . who remain unrecognized for their vital Christian ministry.²⁵

A few men have emerged as conference leaders of exceptional ability and vision. Among these are M. B. John, pastor of the large Mahbubnagar church; D. J. Arthur, conference evangelist, now teaching at Yeotmal Union Seminary; N. P. James, principal of Shamshabad Bible school and college; J. Paranjyothi, conference chairman and Bible teacher; R. K. Murthy, former head of radio and literature work, now in high-caste evangelism; V. K. Rufus, teacher in MBBI and now studying in the Bible College in Winnipeg. Others are studying at the seminary in Fresno.

Leadership is being developed in another, more surprising quarter. The women of the church are beginning to emerge from their silence. D. J. Arthur told a reporter, "The woman in India has been for a long time home-confined, somewhat of a slave, the possession of the man. The Christian church gives more public freedom."²⁶ The Mennonite Brethren women now have a program and camps of their own. In 1958 the Shadnagar women's convention discussed such women's affairs as Christian weddings, care of children and disease, the Indian woman's place in home, church, and society. Since then several types of camps have developed: conventions for

educated or salaried women such as preachers' wives and teachers; local camps for village women where life in the home and Scripture lessons are discussed; and camps for girls.

Of the Veldunda camp, Kalvakurthy field, missionary Emma Lepp wrote:

I saw again that our hope for the church in India lies in the villages. It was such a thrill to see how these women handled the entire preparation for the camp plus the running of the whole matter during camp days. All we had to do was teach and speak. . . . So many of them were just ordinary village women but they bravely came forward, stood in front of the group that had gathered from 14 villages, and witnessed to their joy.²⁷

Of the girls' camps another missionary wrote:

Withdrawn young women blossomed forth in these camps, took responsibility, at first very hesitantly, at present with confidence. Today organization and leadership is entirely indigenous. . . .²⁸

Money.--"The church has not learned to give," said D. J. Arthur; "Instead, it always looks to the mission with imploring eyes and outstretched hands."²⁹ Without doubt, self-support is the church's most difficult problem. Even when the spirit is willing, the substance is hard to come by. India, with an average annual income of \$78, is the poorest country in Asia. Of the 8000 families in the India church, about 2000 work on the land and another 3300 are coolies, working for very low wages. The 2700 families who work in government offices, schools, and the like receive somewhat higher wages, perhaps RS.200 (\$20-30).

At one time the mission tried economic projects, designed to put more rupees into the family purse. The Deverakonda field, for example, lies in a sort of vacuum between monsoon areas and is thus an arid, semi-famine region in which agriculture alone will not support the people. Half the Christians belong to the leather-worker or shoemaker castes. But because their methods of tanning were often inferior, they could not meet competition. A tannery was opened by the Mennonite

Central Committee to give instruction in leatherworking processes and in the making of belts, volleyball covers, and the like, using in part the skins of the cobras and vipers which abound there. The project was successful for a few years; then it was abandoned because of inefficient leadership.

A more successful approach in gathering money for the church has been to urge tithing even though incomes are very small. A 1966 Governing Council resolution states that "Governing Council delegates must belong to a Church, and also they must be tithe givers to the Church."³⁰ Another resolution: "the members (are) to train their youths in giving and to implement this forth with."³¹

The India conference took special measures in 1965 to raise money for evangelism, in the hope that if response was good, the churches could then go on to support other programs. An Evangelism Central Fund was set up with the target of Rs. 24,000 annually, or Rs. 1 per member (membership at that time was estimated at 24,000). In another project, every home was encouraged to raise one chicken to be sold for the conference treasury, and to set up in the kitchen an earthen pot into which a handful of grain was put daily, to be taken to church on Sunday as an offering.

One young man, V. S. Willard, found his own way to raise money for evangelism. Given two minutes to address a convention, he went to the front and immediately said he would not come down until he had an offering of Rs. 1000. A farmer was the first to come up with 100 rupees. Before Willard stepped down, he had Rs. 2043 plus a sheep and a buffalo.³²

Stewardship workshops were also held. The workshop in Shamshabad in 1968 was attended by 100 preachers and 70 laymen.

By 1966 the only subsidy given the local churches was for an occasional church building (usually the roof). All other subsidy went to central projects and was channeled through the Governing Council, which supervised expenditure. By 1970 the church will seek not only to support its local program but to provide one-fourth of the total conference budget for Bible

training, literature, and radio evangelism--areas in which it still depends heavily on subsidy.

Missionaries.--Are they still needed by the India church? Apparently, yes, but in a different role. "Everybody realizes that the missionary era is slowly drawing to a close," wrote Anne Ediger in a letter from the field. It is projected that by 1972 there will be no more "missionaries" in India. Those who go out will go at the invitation of the national church, for a specified work, probably for short terms. They will work under and through the national administration as brethren, as equals. Veteran missionary A. A. Unruh notes pointedly that an attitude of humility and loyalty to the Lord, rather than a feeling that Americans "know it all," will make North American brethren useful to the India church. He adds, "I have learned just as much in India as I have taught them about church and Christianity."

Dr. Rajaiah D. Paul, a great Indian church leader, has suggested five areas in which missionary brethren are still needed:

1. To help bring about spiritual revival inside the Indian church.
2. To get the Indian church to accept and undertake its missionary task in India.
3. To work directly among the higher classes of Hindus and Muslims in small classes, discussion groups, and personal contacts.
4. To help free the church institutions from governmental control and make them definitely evangelistic.
5. To stimulate the Indian church to do creative thinking.³³

The India church, then, faces the vast responsibility of finding personnel, money, and vision enough to build a strong church, reaching to the remotest villages. Among the multitude of problems facing her leaders are two which may not be ignored. The first is suggested by the young Hindu who said, "When I leave home I am a man of the 20th century; but when I return, I belong to the 16th century": the problem of youth in

times of change. The second is the problem of caste.

Youth.--Living as they do in a rapidly changing India, the young people expect also a changing church. R. R. K. Murthy points out that they will no longer be satisfied with the old methods used by the church, designed to reach illiterates and harijans but not in step with modern intellectual advances.³⁴ They are asking questions about the church. In his article, "Who Are the Mennonite Brethren in India?" Mr. Murthy remarks:

(Second generation Christians) are educated. They want to know why they should remain as Mennonites. They have to have their intellect satisfied. They want to know the distinctives. Here and there, we find some young people leaving the Mennonite fold, joining some awakening groups. This is evidently a failure on the part of the church or the parents who could not give a relevant answer to their quest.³⁵

His own answer to the question, Who are the Mennonite Brethren? is worth noting:

I am a Christian and happen to be a member of the Mennonite Brethren Church. One need not cry aloud from the housetop that he is a Mennonite. It is for other Christians to identify us as Mennonites by certain distinctives, if we really live them.³⁶ To satisfy the young people, the church will need both to update its methods and be convincing in its distinctives.

Workers among the church youth today must take account of the fact that many are second-and third-generation Christians. They are no longer hearing a foreign gospel from some foreign white man, the first ever to visit their village, but a familiar gospel taught in their own homes. (One should note, however, that even now 57% of the membership had Hindu parents at time of baptism--half the membership were not "born" Mennonites.) The conversion patterns mentioned by today's young people include DVBS, youth camps, family altar, Bible classes, Christian schools, and radio programs as links in the chain that brought them to

Christ. Ernest Kelly, for example, now in the Seminary in Fresno, is a fourth-generation Christian: his father is a minister in Nagarkurnool and his grandfather was a minister for the Mennonite Brethren Mission.

The youth have made some attempt to conduct a program of their own. Central Youth Fellowship began in 1955 for the purposes of cooperating with the Field Associations, organizing youth fellowships in all fields, and helping to spread the Gospel "in all possible ways and means."

One of these "possible means" they felt was sign-board evangelism. The young people of Masheerabad Mennonite Brethren Church put up large Scripture-verse billboards at public centers and crossroads. The first sign was disfigured with tar during the night. The young people cleaned it, only to find it dirty again next morning. When a young man began cleaning it the second time, certain persons threatened him, saying they would kill whoever repainted it. By this time the whole episode was attracting attention and people were waiting around to find out what this controversial sign would say; so that the trouble proved a blessing in disguise.

The first youth camp in 1955 was attended by 300 young men--"railway employees, State Government employees, students of middle and high schools, Bible school" according to the report. The camps have continued in spite of decreased attendance in later years.

Central Youth undertook to pay for meals during the 1968 Golden Jubilee at the price of Rs. 1 per person per day--no small project considering that up to 2000 guests were present. Youth chairman S. A. Bhasker reported that the money was collected, with Rs. 1000 left over to give to evangelism. (Actual cooking was done by a catering crew.)

Caste.--The thorny problem of caste has yet to be solved both within the church and outside it. Caste is the Indian way of life, with such deep roots and complex structure that neither government nor church have succeeded in abolishing it with regulations nor yet in rising above it.

The problem arises in the Mennonite Brethren church because, although most of the Christians are Madigas or below-caste--almost 100% in the southern areas of the field--there are also 1200 Malas or caste people. (The term "harijan" now commonly used was given to the untouchables or outcastes by Gandhi, who was deeply moved by their unfortunate lot. "Harijan" means "children of God.") Furthermore, men like R. R. K. Murthy are now working directly in evangelism among the higher castes.

Henry Poetker wrote in April, 1970:

Few of the leading brethren or missionaries, if any, have faith to believe in an integrated church of caste and casteless Christians in this generation, and yet everyone is hesitant in getting involved in the initiation of a caste church, which would be tantamount to the encouragement of segregation.³⁷ He offered no solution to this difficult problem but added, "The Lord has a way in every situation. This is blessed."

D. J. Arthur, himself a caste man, feels that the church must learn to live with caste. He points out that caste is no hindrance to preaching the gospel. "A Brahmin, for instance, will listen to one of a low caste, provided he has the ability to present the message ably. . . ." But, he says, for this same Brahmin to accept the message and then worship with Christians of other castes present him with grave social problems. Mr. Arthur suggests that the church reconsider its stand concerning caste.

While caste has been the greatest hindrance to people in accepting Christ, perhaps we have been rather too rigid in our stand. Caste has defied all efforts by government and reformers to level the system. It will remain for many decades. Millions will go without Christ if we expect people to come to Christ without their caste. Missions have failed to understand this. People are ready to change their faith but not their caste.³⁸

The Challenge Without

If the work of nurturing believers is great, the

work of outreach, of evangelism, is formidable indeed. In a country where Christians number only 2.4% of the population compared to 83% for Hindus and 10% for Moslems, a tiny majority is trying to speak to a large and often actively hostile majority. In the Mennonite Brethren area there are Christians in nearly 700 of the 1500 villages--perhaps 20,000 Christians in a population of over two million.

"The church lacks evangelistic concern. It is ingrown and complacent," stated an Indian evangelist a few years ago. It may be too much to expect widespread evangelistic fervor from villagers who themselves receive meager Bible teaching. Further, as A. A. Unruh points out, the decade 1950-1960 was a decade of change in policy and administration, to the neglect of evangelism. Now, however, evangelism has become a major emphasis for the India conference.

In 1964 the India Board of Evangelism began an organized plan of 8 to 10-day campaigns, to be carried on by three teams of men: two teams worked in a village preaching and teaching, while a third team toured adjacent villages on bicycles. That year there were 8 campaigns; in 1967, over 200.

"Penetration Mahbubnagar" was an in-depth effort to evangelize this city of 45,000, headquarters for the district in which six of our church centers are located. Early in 1968 a teacher in the Mennonite Brethren highschool, K. Chelliah Reuben, had aroused enthusiasm for an Easter procession through town--whole families joined in carrying large banners with Bible verses, singing to the accompaniment of a band, and handing out tracts as they went. Then in December the Penetration program began. Some 45 volunteers worked each night for a week to visit every home with Christmas tracts. In January the town was covered again prior to the February campaign. Dr. Paul Sudakar, a caste convert and evangelist, preached in English while R. R. K. Murthy interpreted into Telegu (both men are Brahmins who know the Hindu scriptures). Many caste people and Moslems attended this campaign. Anne Ediger wrote later:

How disarming Mr. Sudhakar's presentation of Jesus

of Nazareth was. . . . What clear-cut, intellectually sharp, yet gracious replies he gave, as a Christian citizen of this land, to those who came with skeptical questions or accusations.³⁹

Often, however, the witness is not a church-sponsored effort but is unorganized, individual. Baliaya was a caste man who came to Christ and then told his family that when he died they must give him a Christian burial. Caste neighbors protested, but his family not only gave him a Christian burial but came to Christ themselves. At another place a Christian girl was given in marriage and moved to another village; she won her husband to Christ, and through their efforts a group of believers sprang up.

In some fields, especially Gadwal, response to the gospel witness has taken the shape of a mass people's movement. In Shagapuram village, Gadwal, 67 persons were baptized at the dedication of their church. The 136 baptized in one day in Medikonda were also of the Gadwal field. It is interesting to note that over 9000 Christians, or almost half the total Mennonite Brethren membership, reside in Gadwal field. The group approach is the proper approach in India, says Mr. Arthur:

. . . we must win a family and not an individual of an Indian sub-society. We need to strive for "multi-individual" conversions. This is what is happening in our Mennonite Brethren field in Gadwal in India, though it is unrecognized.⁴⁰

In other fields, as in Deverakonda, response is more individual, with believers scattered widely in many villages. Very often a single person in a family is a Christian, the rest remaining Hindus. The 1970 Statistical Report records 49 villages in which only one baptized Christian (of the Mennonite Brethren church) resides. There is of course considerable pressure on these lone individuals to return to former ways of life. One Christian said, "My neighbors are trying to get me to go back into the national religion. But I am now refined rice, I cannot go back into the unhulled state."

1963: EDUCATION

Our first Mennonite Brethren school was started in Malakpet under a tree, and has now become a big high school in Hughestown where more than 1,000 students are enrolled.⁴¹

That first school has in fact turned into seven accredited high schools, one primary, and one upper primary school. Most of these are on the former mission compounds or in villages near by.

The church is free to promote its own educational institutions. The Constitution of India states that "every religious denomination, or any section thereof, shall have the right to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes." In a country which in 1966 had a student population of 83 million--more than three times the population of Canada--the church has no lack of challenge to strengthen its schools. The chief purpose of the schools, however, is not evangelism per se but the education of the youth of Christian families, both in matters of the Christian faith and in the general education and vocational skills that will enable them to earn a living.

Because of the buildings, properties, and heavy expenditures involved, the Indian conference found the education program much more difficult to handle than church care. After some careful laying of ground, transfer of responsibility took place in 1960. When in 1964 the mission cut off operational expenses, the Indian brethren felt that certainly they would have to cut back their schools. The Governing Council decided, for example, to close the school in Nagarkurnool. But the local people, unwilling to give up their school, scraped together the money needed to keep it going, and teachers went without salary, until today the former primary school has become a fine highschool with 350 students. Other schools sought government aid, with the result that most of the middle schools were upgraded into highschools, enrollment went up to 3000, and Hughestown Highschool received a Rs. 100,000 building. The government pays teachers' salaries and has also made funds available for students from the harijan groups.

The Field Associations are very willing to maintain and develop the properties of which they are now caretakers. In Deverakonda, for example, the school buildings were electrified, several acres of waste land were converted into a dry crop field, and the old irrigation well was again put to use by installing an electric pump, so that some acres of paddy could be developed for use in the hostel.⁴²

Kalvakurthy was the first field to begin a school completely on its own initiative. The brethren got the consent of the Governing Council to build a new primary school, then began looking for funds. When they could obtain neither Mennonite Brethren Board of Education support nor government grants, they went to the churches. Sunday offerings, individual donations, contributions from C.E. groups and the like came in; and the Kalvakurthy school enrolled 80 boarding students.

The Mennonite Brethren Bible Institute at Shamshabad (formerly Bethany Bible Institute) enrolls about 50 students. The staff of 8 instructors is headed by N. P. James. This man, though born into a very poor Hindu family and burdened with supporting them, heard God's call to the ministry and was eventually able to attend Ramapatnam seminary, thus becoming the first Indian among the Mennonite Brethren to complete advanced training.

A few years ago Shamshabad added a junior college in English to attract high school graduates and advanced students. Teachers in the educational system and workers in the hospitals are also sent there for a year of Bible and junior college training. New developments are a summer school and the possibility of an "extension seminary" designed to bring the school to the students--an experiment already being tried in Colombia and Brazil. An in-service training is offered to village preachers in spring and summer, when staff and students join in evangelistic campaigns throughout the field.

Mahbubnagar highschool is presently considering the possibility of opening a junior college, but the shortage of classrooms and funds have put the project somewhat out of reach.

There is no seminary on the field. Years ago when the mission considered advanced theological training for its graduates, the brethren felt that operating a seminary would be too difficult and that the young men would have to go outside the field. Men like N. P. James and V. K. Rufus went to the Baptist seminary in Ramapatnam. Most of the younger leaders are graduates of Union Biblical Seminary at Yeotmal, 200 miles away, a large interdenomination school supported by more than twenty evangelical churches and missions, including more recently the Mennonite Brethren. Among students attending Yeotmal were D. J. Arthur (now instructing there), J. Paranjyothi, Mrs. Paranjyothi, S. J. Joseph and his wife. A number of men have studied in the U.S. or Canada: M. B. John, D. J. Arthur, V. K. Rufus, Chellaiah Reuben, Ernest Kelly.

During 1969 agitation for a separate Telegu state caused such upheaval that schools had to be closed for some time. Concerning the disturbance Peter Hamm wrote:

The Telengana part in which we live was in a perpetual state of agitation for about nine months. . . . Frequent strikes, called "satyagrahas" (supposedly following Gandhi's pattern), have resulted in mass arrests and violent clashes with the police forces. At such times business, traffic, and normal activity is immobilized. Besides the deaths and arrests, many government vehicles and buildings have been burned or damaged. Since January schools have been closed (note: school year runs from July to April). Fortunately, we were able to complete our last school year in February without interruption.⁴³

The following year schools began to function once more but found it difficult to make up for the lost time.

Even when political unrest subsides, a student's path is not always smooth. One young man who registered at the Shamshabad Bible school said that his father had been very angry when he wanted to be baptized as a Christian. But, reasoning that if God could shut the lion's mouths to protect Daniel, He could also shut his father's mouth, the young man was baptized anyway and came for Bible training. Asked why so many students had come from his particular area, he said, "God sent us."

1968: LITERATURE, RADIO, FILMS

When this important work was handed over to the India Board of Literature and Radio in 1968, both press and radio were doing well. The printshop in Mahbubnagar was carrying on a booming business, supplying literature to the whole Mennonite Brethren field and also doing local printing jobs to add to its income. Anna Suderman described the work in detail:

Press work was greatly expanded during the years 1966-68. A full-time staff of nine worked over-time turning out great volumes of printed materials. Books on Christian living, children's story books for radio follow-up, a 5000 edition of Telegu Gospel Songs, the regular monthly church magazine, Suvarthamani. Several printing jobs were taken for VBS and Child Evangelism Fellowship. Printing jobs for our hospitals and schools were frequently among the urgent projects. Local printing jobs were taken to increase income. All M.B. Conference programs and G.C. minutes were being printed. Bible courses for the correspondence school and follow-up material for radio were pushing for priority.⁴⁴

Plans were ready for a large, consolidated Christian Communication Center in Mahbubnagar: space for all communications media--press, radio, Bible correspondence school, reading and counselling rooms and bookstore. But a financial slump cut off funds and the plans had to be dropped. A severe shakeup in personnel at the time the work was turned over to the national board caused a further setback.

Under the new director, Mr. J. Paranjyothi, the work is picking up again. A reading room and bookstore were opened in Mahbubnagar in a rented room, near a college and training school and on a highway crowded with pedestrians. There are also reading rooms at the Jadcherla and Wanaparthy hospitals.

Suvarthamani was judged to be highest in content when a survey of Telegu Christian magazines was made about two years ago. This monthly magazine carries articles, news, programs, editorials, official notices and matters of interest to the churches.

The quality of materials published is receiving more attention than formerly. R. R. K. Murthy once quoted a Hindu intellectual as saying,

We want literature that is spiritual. We want to read books that can answer our intellectual and spiritual quest. We have been given a lot of free booklets and tracts that did not at all answer our need. We want something new.⁴⁵

Mr. Murthy went on to say that people want books in Telegu, written in the idiom of the people, not translated works with a foreign theological terminology.

Writer's workshops are creating some interest. The first Mennonite Brethren sponsored Christian Writer's Workshop was held in February, 1968 (a year before the US-Canada had their first writer's workshop) and drew fifteen students. A British creative writing specialist came to lecture; other teachers were from the Mennonite Brethren staff. Subsequently one man, K. Chelliah Reuben (now in the Fresno seminary) completed a one-year writing course. Indian writers are preparing radio scripts, children's stories, and sometimes articles which appear in North American publications.

The radio work was ably directed by Mr. Murthy during its earlier years. He personally wrote and recorded three 15-minute Telegu programs a week, to be aired in Manila and Addis Ababa. On one occasion he was invited to prepare a Christian broadcast for All-India Radio.

According to G. Bhagvandos, teacher in Mahbubnagar highschool and present director of radio work, Communist China's attack on India's north border in 1962 had a direct effect on Christian broadcasting in India. This attack aroused strong national feeling and united the people as nothing else had done. To steer public opinion, All-India Radio Government talked itself hoarse and people lived close to their radios. Consequently the Mennonite Brethren program saw a 500% increase in response. Furthermore, AIR broadcasted Bible readings and Christian songs, thinking these would help unite the people; and local AIR stations requested Mennonite Brethren programs, which they felt had good quality. Later, Radio Voice of the Gospel in Addis Ababa also

offered to air Mennonite Brethren programs.

Some years before, Far East Broadcasting Company had sent a request for "original, sparkling, India-slanted, Christ-centered programs," and tapes were being mailed to them for transmission in Manila. By chance the Manila evangelical station is dialed only a fraction of a centimeter away from Radio Ceylon, the most popular commercial station in India, so that there was an unusual number of chance listeners.

A potential audience of 40 million Telegus is within listening distance of the three Mennonite Brethren programs: Sreemathi (Mother India), Dyanamulu (Meditations), and Badigantalu (School Bells). Radio potential is increasing since the government is now boosting the sale of transistor radios and installing superpowered transmitters to insure clear reception in even the remotest villages.

The correspondence course "Plain Truth" had by March, 1970, enrolled a grand total of 22,000 students, with nearly 1800 decision cards received. Mr. Murthy wrote in 1964, "How much spiritual hunger and thirst in certain communities! This is a mission to the caste people."⁴⁶ The 1968 annual report does indeed show many caste people enrolled:

Hindus (mostly caste)	2773
Christians (mostly non-caste)	2339
Moslems	144
Total	5256

A Hindu farmer wrote in: "I am studing the courses regularly and earnestly . . . I want to learn more about Jesus." A Moslem: "The more I read the lessons the more I wish to study." A student: "I am thankful that while I was studying I got some wisdom from God. . . ." A Hindu doctor: "I believe in Jesus Christ. I forget the past and start a new life."

The demanding work of preparing broadcasts and handling the correspondence course is now the responsibility of the Indian brethren. How have they fared? A February, 1970 report is optimistic: "The radio work is making good progress. . . . It is more indigenous than it ever has been before." Still, as former radio advisor Anne Ediger points out, the burden of literature and radio may have been prematurely placed upon the

India church, since even the most progressive countries have only recently taken up "electronic evangelism." Missionaries are still needed as a sort of backup system--"within the area of wise counsel," says Miss Ediger.

Films are not yet used extensively. Some are shown at Mahbubnagar, Shamshabad and Jadcherla in connection with schools, hospitals and churches. Special showings in cities of such films as "The Hidden Heart" and "Red River of Life" attracted some 4000 viewers in 1969.

1970: MEDICAL WORK

"We are constantly amazed at how well a patient recovers," wrote Dr. Jake Friesen, thinking of the low hemoglobins and unhygienic conditions he had to cope with. The Jadcherla hospital serves an average of 90 inpatients and 145 outpatients a day. On the staff are Dr. Friesen, three national doctors, and twenty-five nurses. Modern equipment and a qualified anestheticist have lately been added to the surgery department; and according to Dr. Friesen, post operative results compare favorably with those in the West.

Pre-natal and baby clinics are held weekly. Once a week a Christian dentist comes in from Hyderabad. The Nurses Training School, headed by Sister Sowbaghyamma, is now in its eighth year and is providing other hospitals with graduate nurses. Six or more young men are now in approved Indian centers training as doctors, pharmacists, or lab technicians.

The Wanaparthy hospital, 73 beds, has been supervised by Dr. Peter Block and one national doctor. The Deverakonda hospital is directed by Dr. Gandam Sunder Paul.

This large and costly medical complex of hospitals, clinics, and training school was the last and most difficult institution to be transferred to the direction of the national church. The entire program is now directed by the Central Medical Committee of four nationals and three missionaries. Hospital fees cover most operational costs, though not the missionaries'

salaries. The assistance of American doctors is still needed and probably will be for some time, since training is costly and Indian medical men are hard to come by.

Because most patients are not Christians (only 4% at Jadcherla, compared to 88% Hindu and 8% Moslem), witnessing is an essential part of the hospital program. Daily devotions, weekly Bible studies, and Christian Endeavor programs are conducted. Music and messages go to patients over an inter-com. But, says Dr. Friesen, "personal witnessing continues to be the most effective method." Some patients come to Christ in the hospitals: 30 in 1968, 20 in 1969. Others hear the Word of God and are converted later at home in their villages.

In summary, all institutions of the India church are now under national direction. The Missionary Administrative Committee was dissolved in 1968, and the Liaison Committee of two Indian men and one missionary is now the corresponding body between the India conference and the church, U.S. "There is a definite awakening among many of the national brethren to their obligations and responsibilities in areas of giving and administration," wrote Dr. Friesen in a 1970 Field Report. The latest committee reports show greater autonomy, with more far-reaching decisions. Church budget goals are being raised from year to year. The church is much aware of the future, as its convention mottoes suggest: 1968, "A New Vision for the Church in India," and 1969, "The Church in Progress."

THE GREAT COMMISSION

Once a mission, now a church, the India conference is beginning to recognize its own Great Commission. The cycle is beginning to come its full round:

1898: Conference decision to send a missionary to India.

1930-50: The churches that we are to establish must become the evangelizing agency in India, and even beyond India. This is the ultimate goal of our missionary effort and we dare not lower it.

--J. N. C. Hiebert, missionary

1968: The Church in India is a reality. It has taken root. It is growing in confidence, maturity, and numbers. It can stand on its own for sure.

--D. J. Arthur, India conference evangelist

The time has come for us to send missionaries outside Andhra Pradesh.

--J. Paranjyothi, Governing Council chairman

A relief worker was the first to serve outside India. A century ago, Mennonite Brethren interest in foreign missions had begun with the sending of money for India's starving people. Drought, famine, and relief have been a familiar story for India ever since. But in 1968 the India church was able to reverse direction and send out a relief worker: M. B. Davadoss, lab technician in Jadcherla, flew to Vietnam to serve under Mennonite Central Committee.

Now national missionaries are beginning to go out, into the cities and into other areas:

--The 1969 Governing Council resolved to send K. Nathaniel and his wife to work among the industrial employees of Hyderabad at a salary of Rs. 240 per month. Increasing urbanization is requiring a new look at city work.

--In its 1970 session the Governing Council undertook to send a missionary into the Tamil area of Tirupathur, to which Dr. Paton had invited them.

--R. R. K. Murthy is recognized as the church's first missionary to the caste people. He is expected to begin an indigenous work from the start and will be a faith missionary, not on salary.

--A fascinating missions story is unfolding in Alamuru, East Godavari District, where Y. E. John began a faith work without any support whatever. Now after a

year and a half there are 125 baptized Christians, 13 workers, and even a small orphanage. Mr. John wishes the India conference to recognize his area as the East Godavari Mennonite Brethren Church. In a fascinating letter to Dr. Paul Hiebert, he speaks of taking the gospel farther, ever farther,

There are 13 islands in Godavari river. People inhabiting these Islands are very backward people and the gospel has not been taken to these areas. On the shore of the Bay of Bengal, about sixty-five miles from here, there are few islands which need to be considered for new work. . . . We have been praying for the agency area in Harsi-Pattam taluk. It is a dense forest area and nobody has ever gone into the interior with the gospel. . . .⁴⁷

Thus is beginning a new chapter in India missions. The new era is here, when the missionary is no longer a white man but a Telegu.

"Alone we sit like frogs at the bottom of a well. But by contacting churches elsewhere we see the world-wide mission of the church." This by D. J. Arthur in recognition of the fact that the India church needs to take a further step, that of communication with churches of other lands and denominations. A beginning has been made. R. R. K. Murthy has ministered in Japan. The India church sent a delegate to the Congress on Evangelism in Singapore in 1968. Contact with North America is increasingly a two-way fellowship as more Indian men come to study and to speak.

As the Andhra Mennonite Brethren Church takes its place among the self-sustaining, witnessing churches of the world, missions will have come full cycle and the transition will be complete.

FOOTNOTES

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⁴Christian Leader, January 1, 1951, p. 6.

⁵John H. Lohrenz, The Mennonite Brethren Church (Hillsboro: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1950), p. 241.

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⁷Mary Nikkel, Conquest for Christ (Hillsboro: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1961), pp. 63-64.

⁸Lohrenz, p. 242.

⁹A. A. Unruh, Letter to Mission Board.

¹⁰Reader's Digest, September, 1969, p. 226.

¹¹Anna Suderman, Letter to Mission Board, May 2, 1970.

¹²D. J. Arthur, A New Vision for the Church Today: 50th Golden Jubilee Convention of the India Mennonite Brethren Church (Hillsboro, Kansas: Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions/Services, 1968), p. 1. (Subsequent references to this book will be abbreviated: New Vision.)

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¹⁴Paul Hiebert, Letter, March, 1971.

¹⁵Vernon Wiebe, Letter, February, 1971.

¹⁶Gerhard Wilhelm Peters, The Growth of Foreign Missions in the Mennonite Brethren Church (Hillsboro: The Board of Foreign Missions), p. 192.

- ¹⁷Minutes, Missionary Field Conference, 1944.
- ¹⁸Yearbook of General Conference Mennonite Brethren Churches (North America), 1966.
- ¹⁹D. J. Arthur, New Vision, p. 10.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 5.
- ²¹Peter Hamm, Letter, 1970.
- ²²D. J. Arthur, New Vision, p. 7.
- ²³Paul Hiebert, New Vision, p. 19.
- ²⁴Peter Hamm, India Mennonite Brethren Church Statistical Report (Shamshabad, A.P., India: Mennonite Brethren Mission, 1970), p. 74. (Subsequent references to his book will be abbreviated: Statistical Report)
- ²⁵Ibid.
- ²⁶D. J. Arthur, Christian Leader, August 26, 1969, p. 7.
- ²⁷Emma Lepp, Letter, March 23, 1970.
- ²⁸D. J. Arthur, New Vision, p. 12.
- ²⁹Ibid.
- ³⁰Minutes, Missionary Field Conference, 1969, p. 1.
- ³¹Minutes, India Governing Council, 1969, p. 3.
- ³²Christian Leader, May 29, 1962, p. 8.
- ³³Rajaiah D. Paul, New Vision, pp. 33-34.
- ³⁴R. R. K. Murthy, Christian Leader, June 22, 1965, p. 7.

³⁵R. R. K. Murthy, New Vision, p. 16.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Henry Poetker, Letter, April, 1970.

³⁸D. J. Arthur, Christian Leader, August 26, 1969, p. 6.

³⁹Anne Ediger, Mennonite Brethren Herald, April 4, 1969, p. 20.

⁴⁰D. J. Arthur, Christian Leader, August 26, 1969, p. 6.

⁴¹J. Paranjyothy, New Vision, p. 38.

⁴²Board of Trustees report, 1968.

⁴³Peter and Betty Hamm, Letters, August 1969 and January, 1970.

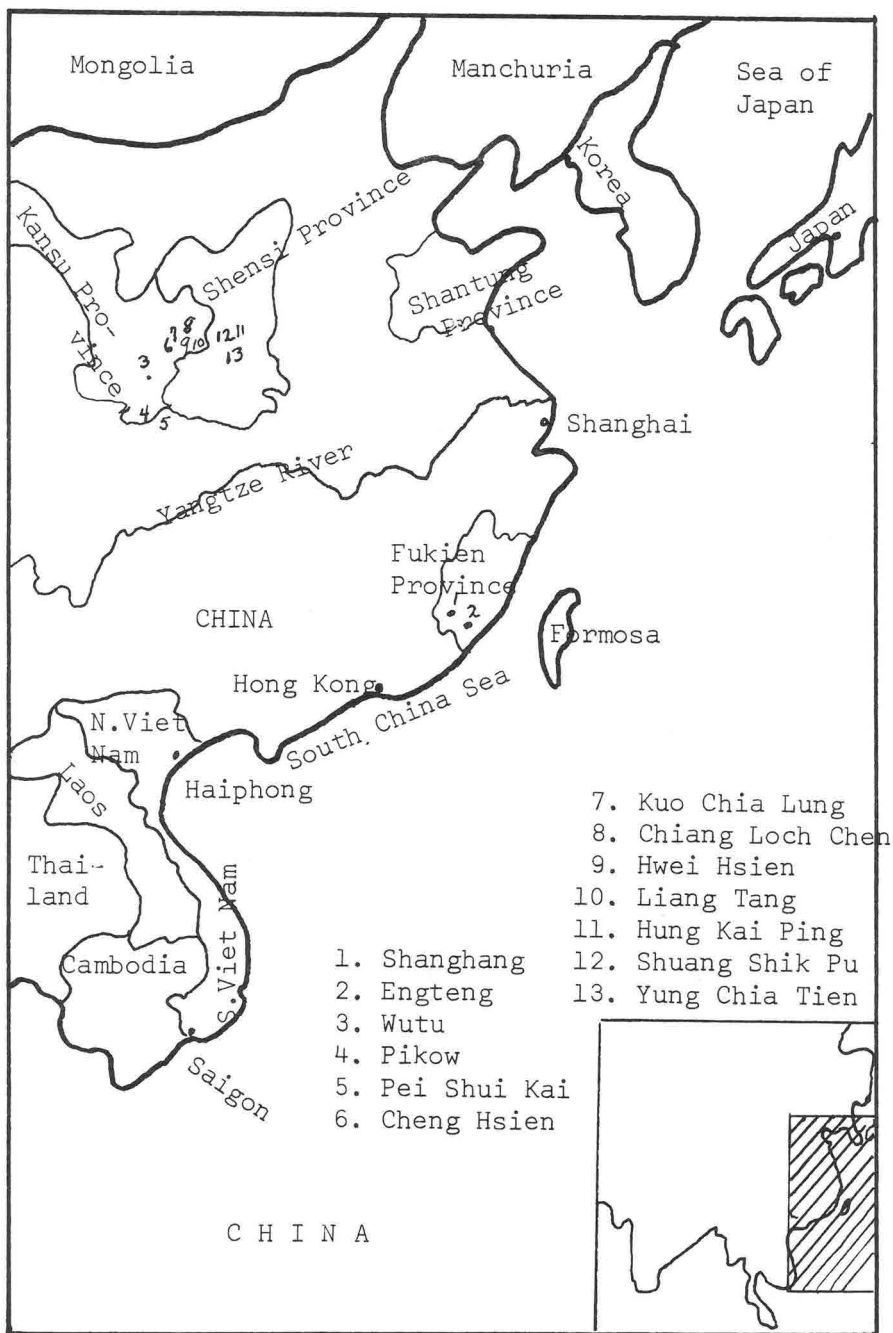
⁴⁴Anna Suderman, Letter to Board of Missions, nd. "G.C." in this quote refers to the India General Conference of Mennonite Brethren.

⁴⁵R. R. K. Murthy, Christian Leader, October 12, 1965, p. 3.

⁴⁶R. R. K. Murthy, Christian Leader, March 3, 1964, p. 9.

⁴⁷Y. E. John, Letter to Paul Hiebert, June 26, 1970.

See also, Paul Hiebert, Konduru: Structure and Integration in a South Indian Village (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971).



CHINA: CHURCH UNDERGROUND

I must say that the whole time of my stay in China has been a time of war.¹

Wars--Civil wars and wars with foreign powers--have dominated China's history ever since the Great Wall was built in 221 B.C. to keep out the Huns. In 1900, about the time Mennonite missions began in China, the Boxer uprisings were in full swing. These were efforts of fanatic nationalists to drive out the "foreign devils," with whom there had been friction and fighting most of the previous century. Eleven years later the revolution occurred which changed China from a monarchy to a republic. During the following years civil wars between powerful warlords made millions homeless, and bandits plagued the country. At length Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist army nominally united the country; but the Communists were already stirring up further trouble. Meanwhile the Japanese had been making arrogant demands and finally in the 1930's launched a full-scale aggression, which broadened into world-wide war after Pearl Harbor in 1941. Nationalists and communists united temporarily to drive out the Japanese, then broke into open warfare with each other once more; Chiang Kai-shek was driven from the mainland to Formosa and some small adjacent islands, and China became communist.

Into this cauldron of wars and rumors of wars went Mennonite missionaries: not in a large organized mission effort but independently or in small groups as the Spirit led them or they were sent by mission societies.

The H. C. Bartels were first, reaching China in 1901 under what was called the South Chihli Mission. A few years later Bartels organized the China Mennonite Mission Society, working in Shantung Province. At one time or another some nine Mennonite Brethren workers helped in this field, including P. D. Kiehns, P. P. Baltzers, and the sisters Emma and Bena Bartel.

Work on this field is summarized by Jonathan Bartel (Mennonite Brethren missionary in Japan and a son of H. C. Bartel):

Eventually six city churches and many village churches, all with national pastors and evangelists, were established on this field with a total membership of somewhere around two to three thousand. A Bible school was also operated on the Shantung field with Loyal Bartel as principal. In 1940 some 70 students were enrolled. Bartels also had an orphanage during the first years of the work. Many pastors and evangelists came from these orphans.²

Historian J. H. Lohrenz notes that this was the largest Mennonite mission in China, adding,

Several mission stations were built and the number of missionaries constantly increased. The large field with a population of 1,200,000 inhabitants was occupied and evangelized. . . .³

The China Mennonite Mission Society was an inter-denominational work. The Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference, however had an independent field in Inner Mongolia, begun about 1923. The Mennonite Brethren missionaries J. S. Dicks supervised this station for a time.

The Hakkas: Mennonite Brethren Field

Meanwhile the Frank J. Wienses were asking the Mennonite Brethren Conference to send them to China. The conference, recently burdened with a large field in India, turned down the request; whereupon the Wienses decided to go independently. Since they had no funds, they traveled via Russia and Siberia, preaching among the Mennonite communities and gathering enough money to reach China and begin working.

In 1911 they arrived in the Hakka territory in South China. Here a Baptist helped them find a mission site in Shanghang, Fukien Province, a beautiful mountainous region.

. . . the heavy clouds were hanging as if it were half way up to the mountain peaks. Beautiful

beyond description were the scenes along the mountain sides, as the little streams rushed through the beautiful bamboo forests, lining, as it were, down the slopes and hills.⁴

Mr. Wiens knew nothing of the language, but the second Sunday, in response to the eager curiosity of the people, he preached a short memorized sermon.

Paulina Foote records her impressions upon arriving, an American foreigner, in the city of Shanghang:

There I swayed in the chair fastened to two bamboo poles, the ends of which rested on the shoulders of two ragged Chinese. They walked on narrow paths through fields, climbed over tumble-down city walls and walked narrow streets with adobe houses on both sides which began to arouse my suspicions. . . . The streets remained narrow but the buildings alongside began to have at least wooden fronts, though they had no paint and looked very dingy.⁵

To Miss Foote's relief, one of these buildings turned out to be the hotel where Mrs. Wiens was waiting for her.

Shanghang was a city of 40,000, two hundred miles inland from Swatow. Two mission compounds were eventually set up, one outside the city limits and the other inside the city. The "compound" in the city was actually merely two small houses sandwiched between other Chinese homes set so close that their walls were also the mission walls. One house was later torn down to give missionary children a small place to play. Four blocks away a third house became the Bible School and boarding place for students. Near by was a church, across the street from the mission's home for the aged.

The compound outside the city gate was built up more extensively: Bible school, boy's school, girls' school, a large missionary residence and other homes, small hospital, cow and chicken barn, store rooms, and a well. Here was built an impressive brick church. A visitor described the building as having "seating capacity of about five or six hundred, equipped with a new

upright organ, handsome stove, large bell and new bamboo benches."⁶ Practically all expenses for this church were paid by the Christians of Shanghang and the outstations which had sprung up.

About her method of working in the city Paulina Foote, who was teaching the American missionary children at the time, wrote:

My pupils and I started a Sunday School in one part of the city. . . . While walking along the streets we met dirty and often ragged children playing. We showed a (Sunday School) card with its picture to them and told them if they would follow us to a certain hall . . . we would tell them the story of the picture. . . . We had some very small lesson cards with the Golden Text printed in Chinese. Each child that attended received one of these. . . .⁷

The Hakkas were interested in what the missionaries had to say, and when some fifteen adults asked to receive baptism, the Mennonite Brethren Church of the Hakkas was born.

After the Mennonite Brethren Conference somewhat belatedly adopted the Hakka field in 1919, nine more workers were sent, and the compounds were for the first time fully staffed. Mr. Wiens opened the Shanghang Bible Institute, while others began village elementary schools which in time enrolled up to 500 students. A second station was attempted at Eng Teng, forty miles away, but because of a staff shortage when Mr. B. F. Wiens died, this station never developed.

In order that the Chinese church become indigenous and evangelistic, out-stations were opened wherever people were interested. Mr. Wiens relates how he tried to begin one of these village outposts by preaching in the market town Tsa Boa:

He (a friend) kindly invited us for a meeting in the evening in his shop. A goodly crowd of men assembled and we had a good opportunity, but how should we begin? It is not like beginning a

meeting anywhere in a church in America. He being a doctor, naturally the conversation centered around things medical and sickness and how to heal. This brought us to discussions about operations. To any of the heathen in the interior it seems an inconceivable thing that an abdominal operation may be performed and the patient still live. Then I was asked to tell about my own operation and how it could be that I had not died. Here was my opportunity, and after explaining it all I began to preach. . . .⁸

By 1932 there were fourteen such outstations. Some, like the Eng Teng congregation, immediately went to work to build their own churches.

Civil disturbances continually disrupted the work. At one point Mr. Wiens was caring for wounded Northerners inside the city while his wife was nursing wounded Southerners outside the city. Mr. Wiens was held in such respect that he was called on as a neutral to mediate a truce in Shanghang between Southern and Northern forces.

By 1927 the strife between nationalists and communists so disrupted the country that the missionaries had to seek refuge on the coast. "From here on," writes Dr. Peters, "the work became very interrupted and its history is more a report of the coming of the missionaries only to be compelled to leave again after a short stay."⁹

The stations were often occupied by troops on the march. Of the Bartel field Margaret Epp writes,

After Tsaohsien fell to the south political tensions eased a bit, but for another four tedious months the mission compound was occupied by troops. Company after company lived off the mission, emptying its cellars and jostling the missionaries aside in almost every building on the compound. . . . The constant inconvenience of being shouldered aside in their own premises and made to use makeshifts everywhere was wearing.¹⁰

What the people themselves suffered at the hands of their countrymen is beyond description. Mr. Wiens wrote,

Who can describe the torture they had to go through and the amount of innocent blood which was shed when the armies came and went, pressing the people with the most shameful torture to give up their hard-earned possessions and valuables. More than that, hundreds and thousands of people, men and women, were caught by them and forced under the carrying pole to transport the heavy guns and ammunition. Those who could not carry were beaten half to death by the cruel soldiers. . . .¹¹

Missionaries temporarily returning in 1929 found the stations at Eng Teng and Shanghang in ruins; the property was later confiscated during the land reforms.

The groups of believers continued, however, under national leadership. A Hakka Mennonite Brethren Conference had in fact been organized as early as 1920. Six years later the conference had adopted plans for a Church Council which should supervise the work of the congregations, together with the missionaries, and which would have authority over certain funds. By this time the total membership had reached 400, in several organized churches and 21 outstations.

Conditions remained so difficult and persecution so severe that by 1934 only two places still had sufficient Christians for regular services. Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Wiens, returning that year, found themselves the only missionaries in the whole Hakka region. Their energetic work found such good response, however, that when they left in 1940, nine outstations were operating under four ordained ministers, eight assistants and six Bible women.

In fact Pauline Foote writes,

Never in the history of China were the doors for the Gospel open so wide as in the years of 1935 to 1950. Many turned to the Lord. People in the villages cooperated and built churches and then

went to mission stations begging for teachers. . .¹²

Margaret Epp adds of the Bartel field before Pearl Harbour,

Actually, this was a time of spiritual growth, outwardly at least. Attendance at public meetings doubled and they trebled during the first two years of the Japanese war. Bartel wrote that they hoped the fruit was genuine.¹³

The declaration of war between Japan and the U.S. affected the Japanese-controlled northern field most directly, American and British missionaries were immediately declared enemies and taken into custody, including Loyal Bartel and his family. Paulina Foote, then living there, happened not to be at home that day and was able to go into hiding. Though she was searched for and the Loyal Bartels threatened and interrogated, she was not found. A few sentences she wrote later show the confusion prevailing at this time:

One day I looked to the south and saw the people fleeing north. I looked to the north and the people were running south. Villages on both sides, one-half to two miles distance, were molested by traitors. The Lord had a small place of refuge for me between them; thus He delivered me also on that day.¹⁴

Miss Foote escaped to Free China--the only white woman to do so, as far as she could find out. Here in the mountains of Shensi and Kansu provinces, the H. B. Bartels were pioneering what was later called the West China Field. (The Bartels had left their former field just months before Pearl Harbor and so were not confined.) Miss Foote and other Mennonite Brethren missionaries, unable to work on either field to the east and reluctant to leave China, served on the West Field until all of China was overrun by the communists. The West Field was accepted by the Mennonite Brethren Mission Board as its responsibility during the few years it existed.

Japan was conquered and in 1948 Roland Wiens, a son of Frank Wiens, was sent back to the Hakka field to continue the mission if possible, since while the communists now occupied the north and central areas, they were not in force in the south. The stations were still in ruins, though the houses inside the city were still there. Though very few still attended church, a small nucleus remained, in Shanghang as well as in the outstations Fay Lung, Song Tsok, Tsah Soo Hah, Eng Teng, and others where Mr. Wiens visited. Attendance picked up in the Shanghang church. A Bible school began once more with 12 students.

A few months after they arrived, the Wienses were advised by the American consulate to leave China. Such an abrupt departure seemed unwise to the Wienses, and they stayed on for another two years, in spite of the departure of many other missionaries.

A year later the communists were driving the nationalists from the mainland. Reports came in that both fields were now under communism, that the missionaries were carrying on under restrictions. Control of Fukien province see-sawed back and forth between Reds and Nationalists.

About this time H. C. Bartel on the West Field undertook a 300-mile walking trip, but could accomplish little because of troubled conditions and soldiers on the move. Roland Wiens wrote that on a boat trip up-river from Swatow to Shanghang they met river bandits pretending to be recruiters for the army; only with great difficulty were the men prevented from commandeering the Wienses' two boatmen and robbing the whole party.

When the nationalist army moved away from Shanghang, the soldiers took a large number of the Shanghang youth with them. Services continued in the church. Songs were sung by hanging sheets of paper up in front, printed with the words, since there were almost no song-books. Early morning prayermeeting was well attended. Young people, rebelling against old forms of idolatry and religion, were not yet turned against the missionary. A report from Missionary Challenge said of West China,

At present there is little if any anti-foreign feeling in West China . . . Chinese youth is very normal, open, friendly, eager to learn, and is not saturated in the superstition and fear of their parents.¹⁵

However, with the Korean War in 1950 came more anti-American propaganda. Even the children on the street began calling the Americans "American Imperialists." The New Chinese government began taking steps to limit the scope of activity of all institutions, including churches. To draw the church into supporting the political regime, the government excluded all foreign personnel and use of foreign funds, except for schools and hospitals. To eliminate evangelism, it confined church ministries to routine work.

The church, if it was to continue to exist, was now forced to become indigenous. Some preparation for self-government had been made, but the leaders now had to learn more about organization, discipline, principles and doctrine. Margaret Epp in her biography of H. C. Bartel says of this changeover:

In many missions paternalism had, up until now, been taken more or less for granted. All field conferences at Tsaohsien were missionary conferences. Here policy and placement were discussed and decided. Native workers received a stated stipend from the mission funds. The local churches had no responsibility but to accept the Chinese or foreign pastor and workers who were placed over them.

The changeover to an indigenous church was not without pain both to missionary and church. Independence and responsibility go together. But responsibility is not shouldered, staid judgment acquired, overnight. Mistakes were inevitable. And it was not easy for the missionary to keep hands off and let the infant church collect its own bruises, if need be, while learning belatedly to walk.¹⁶

Pressures mounted. At some places mission compounds were taken over by the military, were looted or destroyed or missionaries forbidden to operate. Institutions closed down for lack of funds or absence of staff. Churches began receiving many long questionnaires to fill out for the government--each longer than the one before. Many missionaries had left; some stayed on at the growing hazard of their lives. At one point a number of Chinese pastors and Bible teachers were asked to work with a communist committee to rewrite the Bible to make it conformable to communist doctrine.

A report from Roland Wiens in the south in 1950 said that they were still unhindered except for restriction on travel. An increasing number of robber bands roamed about, murdering and plundering travelers.

The presence of missionaries was beginning to be troublesome for the people, however, and those whose churches were more or less indigenous left the country. It was best not even to write to people in China since suspicion was attached to the receiving of foreign mail. Still, Roland Wienses stayed on, Shanghang being small and needing them and open opposition not yet flaring in the south.

By 1951 land reforms had begun in the Shanghang area. Reports came that the Chinese were impoverished by war, business was slack. The church however was trying to take hold. "It is such a thrill to our hearts to see Pastor Dgui getting inspired and doing his best to now help encourage the outstations," wrote Mr. Wiens. "The Chinese are beginning to take hold of the rope and help us pull."

In Korea, thousands of Christians were being killed. In one city a mass grave was found in which 1800 people, all pastors and leaders, were buried in groups of 30 to 70.

By May of 1951 the report came that the Wienses and the Bartel sisters were on their way out. Loyal Bartel had bought a few acres on the north field during the time money was losing its value, and was farming them himself; he was thus considered a farmer instead of a missionary and given more rights, and was staying on, although his family went to the U.S.

The Bamboo Curtain

When the last missionaries left, the Mennonite Brethren converts numbered about 1000. On the Hakka field, as in all China, the Chinese church now became the church underground. All over the world people watched and wondered whether the fledgling church could survive, whether its faith would outlast the harassment, the massacres, the intense pressures put upon it by a nation of 760 million people driven into Communism.

A few scattered reports indicate that it is surviving, though in secret. In 1958 the Christian Literature Association (Christian and Missionary Alliance) operating near Kowloon, Hong Kong, reported that up to this time the press had sent back to the mainland over 23,500 packets including over 150,000 pieces of gospel literature. As a result, in three years more than 4750 persons had written to inform them of their conversion. Of these, 400 letters were from the mainland, sent at considerable risk. A Chinese magazine by the Christian Witness Press was reaching 55,000 Chinese in various countries, including the mainland.

The Bible society in Hong Kong recently printed a New Testament in "communist script"--a simpler form of Chinese characters--and is getting them into China in various ways.

A letter from Loyal Bartel to his brother Jonathan in 1966 reported that Red Guards had invaded Loyal's home and destroyed books, pictures, and writings; next day he found one page of the gospel of Matthew not burned. Of another letter on February 21, 1967, Jonathan said, "He writes with a note of joy and praise." Loyal has been up twice for trial by the village, but because nobody of the villagers would speak up to denounce him, he was released both times.

A Christian Times report confirms rumors that the churches were closed in August, 1966, by the Red Guards at the start of the current Cultural Revolution. The Government aimed at destroying all old ideas and traditions, including Christianity and other forms of

religion. All church buildings were closed, torn down, or converted to other purposes. Bibles were destroyed, so that Christians must rely on memories for recollection of Biblical teaching.

Still, Loyal wrote, many believers continued to witness; his little two-room house always has people in it, and he found opportunity to speak about God to them. How many Christians still exist, nobody knows.

News of the church is unobtainable except for the few scraps of information that trickle in with travelers and traders. Paul Bartel reported to the mission board in 1969 that worship on the mainland is now a clandestine affair. Nothing has been heard from Loyal in three years.

The church is underground.

Openings In The Curtain

The "ping pong diplomacy" of spring, 1971, and other changes indicate a slight opening in the Bamboo Curtain. The Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions asked Roland Wiens to be the conference "China watcher" so that Mennonite Brethren could move in should the opportunity materialize.

¹F. J. Wiens, Fifteen Years Among the Hakkas of South China, p. 114.

²Jonathan Bartel, Letter, January, 1971.

³J. H. Lohrenz, The Mennonite Brethren Church (Mennonite Brethren Board of Foreign Missions, 1950), p. 250.

⁴F. J. Wiens, p. 45.

⁵Paulina Foote, God's Hand Over My Nineteen Years in China (Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1962), p. 29.

⁶A. K. Wiens, "The Work of the Mennonite Missions in China," unpublished Master's thesis, University of Southern California, 1951, p. 109.

⁷Paulina Foote, pp. 35-36.

⁸F. J. Wiens, p. 88.

⁹G. W. Peters, The Growth of Foreign Missions in the Mennonite Brethren Church (Mennonite Brethren Board of Foreign Missions, 1947), p. 238.

¹⁰Margaret Epp, This Mountain Is Mine (Moody Press, 1969), p. 100.

¹¹F. J. Wiens, p. 168.

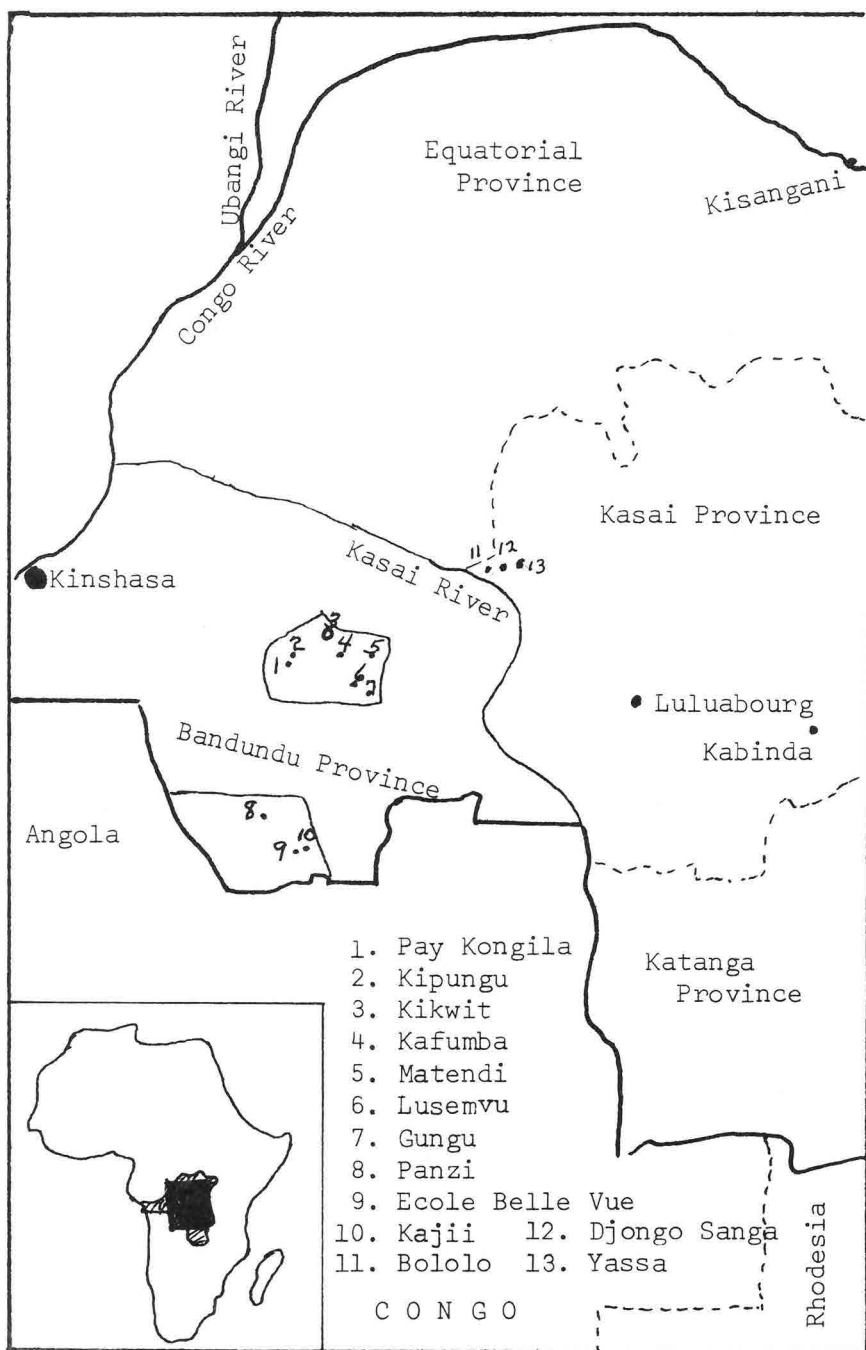
¹²Paulina Foote, p. 223.

¹³Margaret Epp, p. 112.

¹⁴Paulina Foote, p. 147.

¹⁵Christian Leader, March 1, 1950, p. 13

¹⁶Margaret Epp, p. 87.



Chapter 4

CONGO: THE EMERGING CHURCH

"Congo is changing before her history can be written." --Christian Leader

Congo, once a Belgian colony and before that a mysterious territory in the unexplored African interior, now is defining itself as an independent nation. It is working to find a government which can cope with tribal hostilities, rebellions, riots and secessions. It is rebuilding an economy which until ten years ago was a colonial, dependent economy. It is attempting to educate and unite 21 million people in over 200 tribes--people who either crowd into already crowded cities or who live in remote, scarcely accessible areas. It is establishing attitudes towards whites, after four hundred years of every type of contact with them as entrepreneurs, slave traders, work bosses, colonizers, missionaries. It is adapting to its own terms the preaching brought by both Protestants and Catholics.

Evidence that the country is emerging from the chaos of the past decade is the degree of order prevailing today. There are fewer roadblocks: travelers can journey in comparative safety. The government which started as a republic, then became a military dictatorship to deal with uprisings, is now a civilian government. The white men who once had to flee for their lives are now being invited back to assist technologically, though the Congolese are clearly in charge. To educate its youth, Congo is subsidizing mission and other schools which conform to government requirements, and is working hard to provide high schools, colleges, professional schools. To improve agriculture and transportation, the people are beginning to respond to Mobutu's slogan, "Roll up your sleeves and go to work."

Evidences that the Congolese church is also emerging are several. First, one might note the vigorously growing movement called Kimbanguism. Simon Kimbangu was a young man of the Bakongo tribe who attended a Protestant mission and then in dreams heard a call to

preach to his own people. Apparently his message was based on what he had learned at the mission, and his work "a sincere effort to bring the Christian faith to bear upon the life, fears, and needs of his people."¹ The emotional excitement of his meetings and the healings which accompanied them attracted many hundreds of people, and the movement soon grew out of Simon's control. When political and racial factors began to enter in, the whole movement was banned and Simon himself jailed and exiled for the rest of his life. Now, however, Kimbanguism is a large, recognized national movement with religious headquarters in the Bakongo. Its doctrines are controversial, partly because tribal beliefs have been accepted along with the Christian message.

Then, too, there is the current ecumenical movement to unite all Protestant churches into one, called the "Church of Christ in Congo." The new "super-church" was voted into being in 1970 at a meeting of the Protestant Council of Congo. The aim is, in part, to put an end to conflicts and divisions and thus strengthen the Protestant voice; and to rid the national church of the domination of white missions, which are supposed to be fused into the church without delay. It appears that the various denominations will be allowed to operate within the structure, though they will now be called "communities." A missionary wrote from the Mennonite Brethren field,

Most missions are a part of this, including ours. It has its influence not only in evangelism, but education and medical work as well, and is seeking many other areas. This carries with it concerns, in that one feels that sometimes the emphasis is more on the organization of the church than the Person of Jesus Christ.²

The Mennonite Brethren churches in Congo have matured to the point where mission and national church are about to fuse. The papers have in fact been drawn up, ratified in the remoter villages, and presented to the government. Within the year 1971 the church is expected to own all property formerly belonging to the mission, except personal possessions and the missionary

children's school and hostel in Kinshasa. Thereafter, use of property by missions personnel will be according to written contract.

Thus in an emerging country, an emerging church. The problems of uncertainty and strong feeling which surround the one surround also the other. The roots of both country and church lie deep in the past; but there is a strong drive to reshape from that past a new kind of future.

"GIVE US LIGHT"

A Congolese woman prayed at a chapel service one morning: "God, we are people of the night. We do not know the depth of it. We realize, however, that there is light. Give us more light."

Her words echoed back over the centuries. Africa was once the Dark Continent, dark to the outer world and dark to her own peoples. The once bright light of the Christian church in the north had long since gone out. Unexplored, unknown, the great interior moved in its own secret rhythms of primitive life and of drums beating the rituals of an ancient paganism. Into the darkness came the slave traders and the bitterness of fear of the exploiters. Then David Livingstone came, and in 1877 explorer Henry Stanley, and the beginning of light.

More extensive exploration of the Congo began with the Baptist Missionary Society of London. Other societies joined, so that by 1900 the Africa Inland Mission and other organizations were at work.

The Belgian Congo, as it was known until 1960, derived its name from Belgium, to which it belonged, and its principal river, the Congo. The country is larger than Texas and Alaska combined. Half of it is covered with scarcely penetrable rain forest; the rest is made up of hills, mountain ranges, low grassy plains, and wooded savannas. The climate is hot and humid, except in the cooler and more healthful east and south-east. Torrential rains pour down from September to May in the south and from April to November in the north. A missionary wrote back about the beauty of the rainy

season:

The trees and grass are luscious green. The Bougainvillea bushes are gorgeous in their bright red and lilac colors. There are huge bushes of roses blooming almost through the whole year. Along the sidewalk we have tiny white flowers in clusters. . . . Then there are big trees all covered with yellow blossoms. Among these flowers are the stately tall palm trees waving their heads in the tropical breeze. . . . Just now I hear the crickets. It is evening and they come out of their holes. . . . Soon we will see little fires all over the country. People are hunting big fat crickets for delicacies for their meals. The big bright moon is high in heaven. . . .³

Congo has huge resources of minerals: from the sands of the Kasai River come most of the world's industrial diamonds, and at one time Congo was the principal source of radium. Still, most of the people work on the land or fish and hunt for food. In the Kwango-Kwily area where the Mennonite Brethren field used to lie, the soil is poor and sandy, but nut-bearing palms and manioc (a cassava or tapioca root) flourish.

The people are largely of a Bantu-Negro stock; they are of medium height and brown-black in color. The Congolese are divided into more than 200 tribes and speak many languages. However French and the four trade languages--Kituba, Kiswahili, Tshiluba and Lingala--permit communication throughout the area. In jungle country the villages are placed along the rivers, the only way to travel; but more recently the roads built in more open country permit a good deal of travel overland.

When early missionaries arrived, they found a people who lived very close to the soil, growing manioc in small patches, hunting and fishing. The people forged tools by hammering with rocks their crudely smelted native metals. Clothes were made from raffia, or the bark of certain trees, or from animal skins. Houses were built of poles cut in the forest and tied together, then roofed over with grass. For entertainment the villagers gathered to dance or to match feet,

and to drink beer made of the sap of the rafia and palm trees. Polygamy and trial marriages were customary and adultery abounded, even though there were laws against adultery as well as a definite marriage code.

Life expectancey was below thirty years. Medical care consisted of fetichism, sorcery, and herb medicines. Some of these medicines were good; but because the people did not know what amounts to give, they frequently killed a patient with an over-dose. Beside nearly every hut was a small house in which were kept heathen "medicines"--strength, wisdom, protection against fear and evil and sickness. This "medicine" actually consisted of bones, an idol, bundles of feathers and dirt tied together, and other ritual objects. The witchdoctor would assist with sacrifices and rituals, and villagers who were ill would sometimes knock out teeth for a sacrifice and otherwise torture themselves to rid themselves of the sickness. It was no wonder that once the mission won their confidence, the people stood in crowds waiting for the new kind of medical treatment.

To the African, the existence of the evil spirit world was overwhelming and powerful. An elderly man standing by the bed of his sick wife said, "White man, don't you see the evil spirits in the room here?" To this fear they added a hatred of their enemies which often flared into bloody tribal warfare.

To these people came Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Janzen, purposing after ten years with the Congo Inland Mission to begin a Mennonite Brethren work. They at first chose a place called Kikandji. But finding poor soil, Mr. Janzen searched further until he found, six miles away, a beautiful and fertile valley. It had good water, palm forests, good clay for bricks--and elephants. The name Kafumba in fact means "nest of elephants." In the mornings when the men wanted to build, they had to wait until the late-sleeping elephants would decide to get up and move into the thicker forest.

By July, 1924, a house was ready and the missionaries moved in. The forest gradually gave way to patches of sweet potatoes and groves of fruit and coffee trees. Buildings went up--chapel, residences, hostels,

barns, huts, workshops. Here dwelt not only the Janzens and their national workers but other arriving missionaries, there being as yet no other station. It was fortunate that the mission site had 120 acres.

Walking, canoeing, bicycling, seldom driving since there were few roads, the missionaries went into forest and bush to find the people they had come to evangelize. The people were not unfriendly. Rather, being themselves illiterate, they highly respected the white man for his great wisdom. They listened to the Bible stories and learned by rote until they had been taught to read. Those who came to work in missionary homes attended daily devotions and saw for themselves how the foreigners lived. Later some of these household helpers became Bible teachers and preachers.

Pastor Timothy Djimbo of Kafumba was one of these. When he was a boy, a man who had a quarrel with his father captured him and held him for high ransom. The father could not pay, and Timothy became a slave. He was terrified of the white man, who allegedly caught children and ate them. When his master the chief told Timothy and another boy to take a chicken to the white man's house, Timothy was afraid. To his great surprise, he was met by a smiling white woman who told him about a school where children were loved and welcome. Timothy finally went to the mission school and served as a house boy; and became the pastor of the large Kafumba church.

In payment for work and goods the Congolese were given a kind of strong white muslin which they called "Americani." Mr. A. A. Janzen himself became known far and near as "Americani"—a tribute to his strength and durability, like the cloth he gave. Salt was also used as currency since refined salt was not obtainable locally.

After a time not one but two fields were in operation, neither yet accepted by the mission board. During their furlough the Janzens had aroused such interest in Congo that in 1932 five missionaries came

out; they worked first at Kafumba, some later at Shimuna, then at Bololo, 450 miles north of Kafumba. During the lean years of World War II, when no new missionaries could come, the Bololo group was on furlough and for four years the station had no resident missionary.

Then suddenly many missionaries came. In response to mounting pressure the North American Mennonite Brethren Conference at last assumed responsibility for both Congo fields in 1943, and between 1944 and 1949 sent out seventeen missionaries--the highest number ever to be sent by the board to one field in such a short time. The new arrivals were Susie Brucks, A. F. Kroekers, Frank Buschmans, Willie Baergs, I. L. Friesens, Annie Enns, Margaret Dyck, Tillie Wall, Erna Funk, Elsie Gunther, John Kliewers, Abe Esaus, John Ratzlaffs, and Mary Toews.

Kafumba station hummed with activity. Not only evangelism but building and administration had to be attended to; for in time the Kafumba complex included a Bible school, hospital, dispensary and clinic work, orphanage, girls' home, industrial training program, and print shop. A worker wrote,

There is so much work waiting to be attended to that one hardly knows where to begin and where to leave off. We had some 700 children in school . . . to have the job of putting hundreds of . . . boys to work and then keeping them working is quite a task in itself.⁴

Missionaries fanned out into surrounding areas. Matende, fifty miles away, was the second station. Kipungu was the third. About five hundred people, including three chiefs, attended the dedication of the Kipungu church in 1953. As one missionary described the scene, the people entered with a baby on one arm and an ear of dried corn in the other. Since benches were not ready the congregation sat on large poles, and often the service was interrupted by the cracking of poles giving way.

Far to the north in the Kasai area, missionaries occupied Django Sanga, to which the old Bololo work had been moved, and also opened Yassa. The trip from

Kipungu to Django Sanga is 500 miles and took over three days one way. Between these two farthest-distant stations were six rivers to be crossed by ferry or boat, taking from half an hour to three or four hours each, depending on the wait; then came three or four hours trip down the Sankuru River by motor canoe, to Django Sanga beach, and finally a three-mile walk through the forest.

The Kasai region is more heavily forested and the people more primitive. A worker wrote, "Unless a Dengese is a Christian, he would just as soon kill. They use as weapons the bow and arrow, spear and knife."⁵ About the beginning of the Yassa station in this region Arnold Prieb wrote:

There was no completed building when we got here and the building that had been started was a three-room, 11 X 27 foot store house. In this we have been living for some time . . . the one great item of keeping the children clean and free from too many illnesses has not been an easy one. The heart of this Dengese forest is very beautiful and it is a real good place to set up a Lighthouse for preaching of the word.⁶

Yassa was closed down after two years, however, and Django Sanga was later given to the African Evangelistic Band because of its distance from the main Kwango field.

When the Unevangelized Tribes Mission dissolved, the Mennonite Brethren mission acquired Kajiji and Panzi. Panzi, a government center, stands on the rim of a hidden bowl-like valley in grass country abounding with wild game--deer, wild dogs, leopards, elephants. Kajiji with its 37 acres and buildings, located on a cool high plateau, became an important station. Half a mile away an experimental silkworm station owned by Lever Brothers of England was taken over by the mission and turned into a school for missionary children, operated jointly with the Congo Inland Mission. Ecole Belle Vue, or "School of the Beautiful View," overlooked a deep scenic ravine and had an excellent climate the year round.

Lusemvu was acquired from an independent missionary. On the day which marked the formal opening of the

Lusemvu church, the people gathered in the grass and bamboo church, with red-earth floor freshly wetted down, to hear their leader remark on the difference between this gathering in brotherly love and the enmities of their forefathers. At the Lusemvu outpost Gungu a work had once been started but the missionaries had left. A Gungu Christian said,

There was no shepherd to take care of the work, and the work all stopped. It was then that the Menno-nite Brethren missionaries began coming to Gungu. . . . People began to beg and write letters to the Menno-nite Brethren missionaries at Kafumba that they should send an African teacher to Gungu again. . . . Many times we lamented because there was no church building. We worshipped in a pole and stick building which fell over in the rains and storm.⁷

The Gungu Christians got their worker and a better church as well, though no missionary was stationed there.

Groups of believers grew up in Ngongo, Kikandji, and Mbutu. The Kikandji Christians worshipped in grass and bamboo sheds for a while, then decided to build. Tons of rocks were transported on the heads of school children and parents from the rock quarries in a distant valley. Sand and water were moved in. Peanuts, chickens and manioc were sold and the tithes given to pay for materials. With \$250 from the mission for a roof, the building was finished.

A. A. Janzen once described the problem caused by the old pole church buildings. The Kafumba building had stood a long time, he said; but during an evening meeting high winds tore so fiercely at it that the leaders prayed for safety, fearing to dismiss the crowd lest they panic. Next day, not knowing where a new building would come from, they tore down the old church--they found pole after pole so completely eaten off by termites that any strong wind could have blown the place down. The new Kafumba church became the largest on the field.

Thus on stations and in villages churches were established. For hundreds of Congolese, Sunday became the Lord's Day. Instead of the beating of drums, the sound of hymns and prayers rose from huts and gathering places.

Under the rays of a tropical sun, mid leafy palms and showy blossoms, in native speech and setting, another Sunday morning service has been concluded. From various trails the tunes of previously sung hymns are put on the air to mingle with the humdrum of Congo's insect world. The black forms have scattered to the four winds and a sacred Sabbath stillness prevails on the camps. The sound of distant thunder and the present drizzle announce today's rain.⁸

Though the Congolese adopted some western methods, they carried on services in their own way. A visitor to the Kafumba church wrote:

The character of the service was much like our services at home with the exception that Pastor Timothy found it repeatedly necessary to pound the pulpit with a stick in an effort to quiet the audience. A number of men finally were placed in the aisles who walked back and forth quieting down those who would whisper. It is their method of keeping order⁹

Sometimes revival came. One group of preachers returned from a village tour with a little sack of idols the people had given up. One idol represented the "unknown god"--a little block of wood an inch square with an eye on each side. The people said that this god made the world and all in it, but since they did not know what he looked like, they made him all-seeing. But now, hearing of the true God, they had given him and the other idols to the preachers.

Concerning a revival near Kafumba in 1954, a missionary noted that a widow in Winnipeg had been praying for a long time for three villages close to Kafumba station. "Certainly " he said, "that is part of the reason why the people in these villages are burning their idols and digging up their heathen medicines."¹⁰

As the Congo church grew, it had to face in increasing measure the problems which arose out of its culture and its generation--the generation of change for all of Congo. Missionary Irvin Friesen summarized these problems:

1. The struggle for independence in a country where decisions are made by the clan or elders, where the

government exerts pressure to rise to certain social, economic, and intellectual standards.

2. The struggle for self-support in the face of mission subsidy and of government demands for good buildings, etc.

3. The struggle against secularism and materialism, western style, which has powerful attraction for a deprived people now given the chance to rise.

4. The struggle against sin. Unrestrained passions and degrading habits begun in early childhood could not easily be overcome. The burden of adultery, lying, stealing, and indifference was a heavy one for the church. Frequently teachers and other personnel had to be released because of fornication and adultery, the environment being especially conducive to these practices. However, Mr. Friesen adds, the Christians are becoming more able to break away from the counsel of ungodly elders.¹¹

If some leaders caused disappointment, other men caused much joy. Manassa E. Booker was the son of a woman who came to the Kafumba dispensary for treatment and there came to Christ. She did not recover; but before she died she taught her boys "Nzila ya Nzambi"--the path of God. Manassa himself became a teacher at Kafumba and went to Bible school to prepare for Christian service.

When Manassa wanted to marry, he found it difficult on a \$2 monthly salary to pay the \$14, purchase the goat, and buy the gifts to relatives of shirts, blankets, bottles of kerosene and soap which custom demanded. But he managed it!¹²

Matsitsa Charles, born of poverty-stricken parents, had a bad stutter. He heard the gospel and being interested, learned to read. When he became very ill his parents gave him up and smashed his belongings, according to custom. But he awoke, asked what the wailing was all about, and said he had had a vision of two men who told him he would live to do God's work. Matsitsa Charles became a Christian that day and went on to study and to teach in the Panzi area.

Lusangu Petelo was trained in witchcraft as a child; but at eighteen he became sick and was taken to

a mission dispensary, where he became a Christian. He later served as pastor in Kikwit.

Besides the struggle for independence, self-support and discipline, the church faced the immense work of evangelizing hundreds of villages, thousands of Congolese. From a 1956 missionary report:

We are very burdened for the many people who live in the villages around Kipungu who do not yet know the Lord. . . . As we passed these villages (20 miles out), I asked the head teacher who was sitting beside me whether there were any Christians in these villages. "A few," he said. "In some villages there are none." We let our pupils and teachers off to spread the Word in various villages and I went on to the palm-nut post.¹³

The need and call existed everywhere. From Mukulu in the Matende field, for example, came repeated requests for a visit. A Protestant clerk in a store wrote, "When will you come with a teacher evangelist? Bring us one who will be able to meet not only the intellectual interest, but also the spiritual need of the people in these villages." After initial opposition, the chiefs and people of that place also sent word saying, "Come, the door is now open."¹⁴

Evangelists visited the interior villages by foot, bicycle, or kepoy. One missionary reported on a visit to the vicious Baholo tribe on the Congo-Angola border: ten deaths from witchcraft and poisoning had occurred during the six weeks before he arrived.

Not only were villages distant and inaccessible, and the people illiterate. Open opposition had to be endured, overcome. In some areas the Catholic priests held firm control. The witchdoctor and his ritual still held powerful grip on the minds of the people; sometimes the witchdoctor went so far as to use the crucifix, prayer chain, and other church images in his magic crafts, thus adding power to power. The extent to which the villagers were caught by conflicting claims is suggested in this report from one of the outposts:

We are seeing much difficulty in starting it.

People do not want to help us for fear of the opposing religion. . . . Only four people from one

village are helping us to build it; others will not because the opposition says they will not buy their manioc again. . . . They want to give their lives to sell manioc, but they don't want the Word of God.¹⁵

Still, just as at night Susie Brucks looked over the countryside and saw small fires lit here and there, so the little fires of Christian faith were being kindled, starting in Kafumba and spreading into the surrounding territory.

GIVE US THE GOOD LIFE

The pattern already familiar in India began to emerge in Congo. Seeing a people in need of medicine and nutrition, people who needed to learn to read and who wanted the books to read when they did learn how, the missionaries went to work to set up clinics and schools and a print shop. They offered to everyone the Gospel; but they offered also a way to a better life, that the light of the Gospel might shine the more brightly.

Give Us Learning

In the villages, smaller schools began. At first a teacher would gather children under a tree, lead them in morning worship, then teach them to count, read a little, and memorize Bible verses. Larger village schools taught the 3 R's and Bible. Those who finished the first grade Kikongo reader and had read the gospels of Matthew and John were qualified to go to the mission schools. By 1945 about a hundred such village schools were functioning.

The Central School at the mission station offered further training in Bible, arithmetic, French, hygiene, gymnastics, and the like. Students were also taught basket weaving, carpentry, agriculture, and other practical skills. Each student, for example, planted and cared for one tree, partly to teach him that it is good to care for something even if only one's successors will enjoy it. (Africans moving to another place often

destroyed crops and buildings so that nobody else would benefit from their labors.)

The children lived in hostels and went home every two weeks to bring back a supply of food, as well as to renew the family ties so important to the African. One missionary described how a small boy returned to the station after one such visit home:

Mother had fixed a big basket of manioc roots, a gourd with palm fat, a little bundle of red peppers (to put up into sauce), a few worms tied up in a leaf and a big banana leaf full of ashes which she had prepared from some salty leaves and which would provide the salt for the boy's cooked dough.¹⁶

This child was fortunate, the writer added--many parents were not interested and the children had to hunt for their own food. During the time of famine when the manioc fields were attacked by blight, the mission tried to stock up on rice, local cereals and dried caterpillars for the school children, but eventually the children had to be asked to go home.

The Bible Institute in Kafumba began in 1934 and for the next thirty years played a large role in church work, for it was from the Bible school and teacher-training school that the teacher-evangelists came: the men who were the key to village evangelism and the backbone of the church. Because many married couples and families attended this school, the mission built dormitories. Duplexes of permanent materials, rather than the older mud and pole construction, were dedicated in 1960.

The women had a school of their own similar to that for their husbands but held only in the afternoons, as they had their field work to do in the mornings.

The teacher-training school, Ecole d'Apprentissage Pédagogique (EAP) was located at Matende. Graduates of this school earned a certificate to teach the primary grades.

Advanced training was to be had at the Congo Inland Mission school in Nyanga, where the students could learn everything from science and French to the manual arts. When A. A. Janzen first did some work in Nyanga, the people were afraid saying, "The white man has come to

eat us." But the strange white man did not eat them, and Nyanga became an important center to which came students from various tribes and areas, including during earlier years the Mennonite Brethren field.

By the 1940's the Mennonite Brethren schools were enrolling some 3000 students, about 450 of these in the central schools at the mission stations. At about this time the government, unable to finance its own educational system, offered to pay subsidies to all mission schools which would cooperate with the government. If a mission failed by a given date to bring its schools up to standard, another mission would have the right to enter that territory. The Mennonite Brethren mission accepted the challenge and signed a contract. This meant that teachers had to study in Belgium for one year--French, Congo history and law, possibly medicine, and other prescribed courses.

Give Us Health

At first missionaries could do little more than give out medicines and home remedies, deliver babies, pull teeth, and the like. A small clay structure was their dispensary.

As the stations multiplied, more dispensaries were built, until nearly every station was conducting some kind of medical work. Mrs. A. A. Janzen applied to the government for money from the Queen Astrid Fund for the erection of a maternity hospital at Kafumba. The request was granted, and the maternity ward was dedicated in 1951. (The report notes that this hospital was complete with a double cistern to provide running water.) When still more new medical facilities were dedicated in 1957, the occasion was honored by the presence of several chiefs, each of whom was given a free injection and a measure of salt.

A serious after-effect of the famine at the time of the manioc crop failure was the widespread tuberculosis and kwashiokor (malnutrition). Near Kajiji a camp for TB victims was set up, and with emergency care came the challenge to give these people long-term physical and spiritual help. During those days the medicine,

care, and food supplements given out by the mission saved the lives of thousands of people.

A government grant of \$60,000 brought the Kajiji hospital into being. Major building materials had to be brought from Kikwit, 240 miles away, over bad roads. The completed complex included two wards of 30 beds each, an administrative and operating ward, a maternity hospital, and lodging for people bringing patients to the hospital.

Give Us Books

From the very beginning the A. A. Janzens understood the great importance of the printed page for their Congolese. After their first furlough they brought with them a small printing press and equipment to prepare their own literature. In 1930 their large veranda in Kafumba was sectioned off to become the first print shop.

As more and more people learned to read in the mission schools, the demand for reading material increased. Another small press was purchased from another mission; then other equipment, and finally a larger press. By this time the print shop was in its third location. Thousands of hymn books, tracts, pamphlets and school books were produced. In 1953 a monthly paper Mwinda (The Lamp) began publication. Years before this the translating of the New Testament had begun with Mrs. Ernestina Janzen. When she died, Mr. Janzen's second wife Martha continued working with neighboring missions to prepare the manuscript for the press. In 1949, after over twenty years of work, the Kituba New Testament came out in handsome black covers. A later edition with Psalms came out in bright red and yellow jackets, since the Congolese love bright colors.

Language was always a problem. Early efforts to print in a tribal language which the Janzens had learned at Nyanga tended to spread materials only into the local tribe, while nearby tribes could not be reached successfully. Publishing therefore switched to Kituba, one of the major trade languages of Congo.

Looking toward the future of publishing and mass

communications, the mission saw urbanization and radio evangelization as coming challenges. In the past decades the urban population of Africa had increased 240%. To begin a city ministry, the mission rented a basement and part of a warehouse in Kikwit, an important center of 10,000 people (today between 75,000 and 100,000). These quarters were to provide a way-station for traveling missionaries, an office for a legal representative to maintain liason with the government, and a bookstore. Since radio sets were becoming common, it was high time to look into the possibilities of radio evangelism.

In spite of many problems, the picture in 1959 was bright for the fifty missionaries and seven stations. Orie Miller, executive secretary of the Mennonite Central Committee, visited the field in 1959 and said, "You seem to have a deeply consecrated group of missionaries working happily; certainly a challenging and promising work; clear strategy. One appreciates your occupying Kikwit; this is significant in today's rapid world urbanization. One appreciates your clearly-stated relationship to Congo Protestant Council (the organization of all Protestant groups in Congo). You are right in concentrating on occupancy now as against further geographical expansion and in your emphasis on worker and youth training. Your literature start at Kafumba impresses as does the bookstore idea for Kikwit."¹⁷

A symbol of this hope for the future was, perhaps, the new printing establishment at Kafumba. Dr. J. F. Friesen of Dinuba, the father of missionary Irvin Friesen, had come to the field; and looking over the crowded printshop had said, "I have come to see to it that you shall have a new print shop." In Congo building projects are generally slow. But in three weeks ground-breaking was held, and in 52 days the project was done: printing room, stock room, book room, bookstore, and office.

Give Us Independence

Seven years later the new print shop was gutted, and the big press stood scorched and rusting in the rain--symbols still, but now of the violent anger raging in the land. The sleeping giant of the interior had awakened.

"Africa today has a questioning youth and is awakening from its age-long sleep and inertia," wrote Mary Toews as early as 1954. Already at that time a head teacher had gone on a sitdown strike for higher pay, despite the fact that his wages were already above normal and that the mission had no more money. Throughout Congo the feeling of independence was rising.

For the Congolese had begun to dream of self-realization, and for good reason. Development of deposits of uranium, gold and other valuable minerals had sent the economy spiraling rapidly upward. Modern cities were springing up, and the progressive Belgian programs in education, public health, industry and agriculture were replacing fear, hunger, disease and ignorance with hopes for a better future. An editorial stated:

The Congo, all 905,000 square miles of it, is the richest territory in Africa. Belgian economic development has brought the natives a high standard of living, perhaps the highest on the Dark Continent . . . the Congo appeared a placid oasis of stability in an otherwise increasingly disturbed continent.¹⁸

The Belgians expected that Congo would eventually become independent and were trying to prepare for independence by teaching the people to vote for their own leaders.

But the earthquake of independence began to rumble much sooner than the Belgians expected. Harold Fehderau, a missionary, wrote:

We left the shores of North America in August, 1958, Congo was still the quiet, vast . . . and tremendously rich colony of Belgium. Then on January 13, 1959, when we were in Belgium for the "colonial course," Congo all but exploded right out of the hands of the surprised Belgians. On that day

there was violence in the streets of the capitol, Leopoldville, as Congolese rioted in protest to the white Belgian government in their country.¹⁹

Uprisings were occurring in different parts of the land. Near Luluabourg, the Lulua and Baluba tribes were fighting with bows and arrows and spears as their forefathers had done. People were injured in riots, agitators were arrested and put in jail.

Still, nobody expected a general uprising. The feeling was that the government would be able to maintain order, more or less. King Badouin had promised in a special broadcast that general elections would be held in 1959, that racial discrimination would be ended and living standards improved, that civil service would be open to blacks, and that at an undated time, full independence would come. Every male would vote in local elections in December, 1959, to give the country experience needed for independence.

The Belgians had expected to move for independence during the course of a few years. But when in January, 1960, eighty Congolese delegates and aides met in Brussels to work out plans, they could come to agreement on only one impatient demand--independence at once, in June. Such a precipitate schedule was alarming. Could the 400-odd tribes really unite to form a central government? Even the delegates could not agree on the type of government and other crucial issues. Would there be tribal wars? Where would leaders be found? Few had highschool education, almost none had university degrees, and there was almost total absence of educated persons with administrative experience.

Fiery-hot newspapers boycotted Belgian-run elections and aroused the people. Everyone shouted "Independence!" Harold Fehderaus, finishing their journey to the mission station, heard even women and children sitting in native houses call out "pendence!" in an attempt to say the word. Many had no idea what independence meant. One group of Congolese forced a Belgian official to stop his car and demanded that he give them the independence which he was supposed to be carrying in his brief case. They imagined independence to be a cure-all for taxes, domination, and all other ills.

In Lower Congo every person was required to buy an Abako card, thus showing agreement with this political party headed by Kasavubu. Abako schools and stores were set up.

Mission property was generally not molested since the people recognized the valuable services being offered to them, though some Catholic missions were attacked because of their involvement with government. However immunity could not be guaranteed--the mood might change. A missionary travelling by train heard an African announce during a stop, "In 1960 all Europeans die!"

New religious cults added to the confusion. Kimbanguism, as popularized by the masses, proclaimed Kimbangu as the savior of the blacks, soon to rise from the dead and usher in a golden age. A former Kafumba church member named Masini proclaimed himself a prophet and ordered the people to get rid of "evil" things like belts, shoes, or glasses. He accused various persons (mostly those true to the mission) of hindering the resurrection of dead relatives who were to come back bearing great wealth. In a time when political rebellion against whites was coupled with desire for the white man's wealth, the people waited impatiently for the golden promises to come true. Those who owned a bike, a radio, or even a pair of dark glasses became arrogant and proud.

Since recognition and registration of all missions and other organizations was to terminate at independence, the missionaries hurriedly began to study ways and means of continuing the work under a changed regime. Congolese Christians by and large wished to continue working with missionaries: yet they wanted to govern the church and other missionary activities, and were careful not to separate themselves from foreign subsidy. The education program was further affected in that after independence the teachers would be paid directly by national officials, and much teaching material would be prepared in Leopoldville. The Congolese leaders, however, assured the mission that they were favorable to the work.

In spite of the turmoil, therefore, the

missionaries stayed on. The people continued generally friendly, and the Christians needed them. They took the precaution of bringing their children home from Ecole Belle Vue a week early so as to have them at home before the December elections. The Belgians, on the other hand, were sending their families back to Europe, having given up Congo as a lost cause.

The local elections in December of 1959 seemed to go off smoothly. As an observer described them, the men previously registered stood in line to vote, some well dressed but most of them in loin cloths and bare-foot, most of them illiterate. The five candidates sat on a platform each holding a large cardboard of a different color. Each voter was given five sheets of paper in these colors. In a secret ballot room he chose the color of his candidate, put it in an envelope and dropped it into the ballot box. The voters seemed to understand what they were doing.

In the elections of May, 1960, Communist-leaning Lamumba emerged as strong man, taking 35 seats to Kasavubu's 12. The country seethed with unrest. Multitudes of people were confused by demands of loyalty made by various political parties. Provinces opposed to Lamumba, including Kasai, threatened to secede. Old tribal enmities were aroused, and inter-tribal warfare broke out. Communism was also stirring up trouble--in Congo there were nine converts to Communism for every one to Protestantism. However, the unrest being chiefly political, the missionaries appeared fairly safe.

Then suddenly came the news, "Mennonite Brethren Missionaries Leave Congo." America was bewildered, and even the Mission Board was taken by surprise. It was some days before the reason for hurried July evacuation could be learned: a mutinous army, angry because the government was not being turned over to the Congolese fast enough, was creating new disturbances and the lives of whites were in danger. Belgian paratroopers came in to prevent mass looting and molestation of whites, but the time had clearly come to leave. The Mennonite Brethren missionaries fled by car convoy to Angola. From here, because of continuing danger and

crowded refugee quarters, many families were flown by army plane to the United States. The Mission Board later stated that never before had it made and received so many long distance phone calls--to families, U.S. government officials, offices of other missions, arranging for passage and for a multitude of details. The emergency cost the mission an extra \$35,000. But all lives were safe.

Africans fled also. At one point during the uprisings practically the entire population of Kikwit, over 15,000, fled into surrounding areas. People living on the border crowded into Angola.

A year later, the stream of refugees was reversed. Severe persecutions in Angola and indiscriminate reprisals of officials following terrorist attacks caused a wild flight back into Congo--over 20,000 refugees in two weeks. Some distance from Luluabourg some 55,000 refugees lived in utter misery in what someone called a "political prison refugee camp."

Dr. Ernest Schmidt distinguished himself during this time by his work in Kikwit, where he persuaded nurses to treat all wounded alike regardless of tribe. The London Daily Express described him as a "lone Canadian doctor seeking to maintain some standard of right."²⁰

All during this disruptive time the political tug-of-war continued in high places, while at the local level the Congolese leaders were trying to establish order. Non-Communist leaders met at Coquilhatville to work out details of government, planning to form 19 states along broad tribal lines and possibly to set up a unicameral Congress.

The mutiny itself was short-lived, and a few missionaries returned in a month or two. By September of 1960 a skeleton staff of men went back to Kikwit, and by 1962 many of the families had moved back in. The prevailing unrest prevented missionaries from remaining at the stations except Kikwit and Kajiji, so that Leopoldville became temporarily the center of operations. Legal and linguistic work was done here, a school for the missionary children was started, tours were made into the bush to visit the churches. Tapes for radio

broadcast began to be prepared in the Kituba language in the hope that a program could be aired to a potential audience of three million people.

John Kliever, returning from the U.S., observed that Congo had changed. The white man was now definitely an outsider, he said, subject to law and fine. The appearance of the cities had deteriorated; Kikwit had an air of going back to the bush. Stores were nearly out of stock, wages were high, cars and trucks hard to get and repair. National pride ran high but there was also a sense of disillusionment. An old chief said, "We asked for independence, complete and immediate, and all we got was death, slow, but sure!"²¹

Reports of the next few years, however, showed the work moving ahead in new directions. In Leopoldville weekly broadcasts in Lingala and Kituba began. Asked about the possibility of a Christian program over government radio, the station man had said, "That is exactly what our people need. They hear too much politics and that makes them nervous." Negotiations were carried on with ELWA of the Sudan Interior Mission to take on their Kituba programs; in 1961 a daily broadcast was begun in Lingala, in 1962 another daily broadcast in Kituba. One hundred radio sets were obtained and placed in the interior to receive the new broadcast.

In Kikwit, because of an accidentally miswritten invitation, John Kliever was able to speak with the President of Congo in person and thus obtain a long-delayed land grant for a church building in Kikwit. The government also approved a bookstall in the open market. Mennonite Brethren Congolese taught religion classes in government schools to 700 children a week. Radio communication was set up between Kikwit, Kajiji, Gungu and Kafumba--a move which proved to be of utmost importance later on.

In Kafumba, the paper Mwinda resumed publication. The printshop was flooded with requests. A book of Bible stories in Kituba with colored drawings was put out. Classes were held for nationals wanting to learn to write.

The Kajiji hospital was trying to spread the

message that God's love makes no distinction between tribes. A new ward was added to replace smoked-up grass huts. Labs, X-ray department and pharmacy were built. In Gungu the bookseller was doing well in spite of inflated prices for literature. Sales of Christian materials in Congo increased twelve-fold.

Ecole Belle Vue came to be used for a theological institute for the Congolese, in cooperation with the Congo Inland Mission. Nyanga (the Congo Inland Mission school where the Mennonite Brethren mission cooperated for a time) was undisturbed throughout independence and was one of the few schools in Congo training students for leadership.

In Pai Kongila, a government post near Kipungu, the 220-bed government hospital was plagued with such a shortage of medical personnel that the Mennonite Brethren mission was asked to staff and operate it. Thus Pai Kongila was added to the Mennonite Brethren responsibility as an area where medical and later church work could be done.

A report at about this time gives the following statistics: 9 stations, 62 outposts, 11 pastors, 57 church leaders, and 8000 members. It seemed that the church and mission were weathering the tumults of independence.

Then, with little warning, a new earthquake shook Congo.

THE JEUNESSE: "GIVE US YOUR LIVES"

Bob Kroeker reported to the home conference, Just when the country seemed to have recovered from the initial results of their battle for independence, the country was swept into a bloody revolution. Our field was the first to be hit.²²

In September of 1963, rumors had drifted into Kafumba of the jeunesse, a French word meaning "youth." These were gangs of men dissatisfied with the failure of independence to meet their demands. They said, "Moscow will help us and give us all kinds of things." Led by Pierre Mulele, they organized originally in the Matende area, where they met in the forest to train in

Red guerilla tactics. Now, in an effort to overthrow all existing authority and build a new Congo, they began making hit-and-run raids in unexpected places. Their terrorist attacks began to convert the normally bustling Congolese community into pockets of fear, tension, and uncertainty.

Their targets actually were not mission stations but government centers; however, since missions work closely with the government, they eventually came under attack as well. In January, 1964, the jeunesse burned down the Congo Inland Mission station of Kandala and seriously threatened the missionaries.

On all Mennonite Brethren stations the missionaries were listening with growing concern to reports coming in over the recently installed communications system. Church services and hospital work went on . . . then:

"Where have you been? We've been trying to get you all morning. Come to Leopoldville immediately" (code words meaning "Come out!"). Missionary John Kliwer's voice at Kikwit crackled over the airwaves as the missionaries at Kafumba turned on their radio receiving set on January 26, shortly after coming home from the Sunday morning service. "The missionaries at Mukedi (Congo Inland Mission station) are already being airlifted out. Leave the station at once. . . ."

Immediately there are questions. How close is the danger from the jeunesse. . . ? The bridge behind Kafumba has already been burned. Will there be enough time to leave in safety? Is the bridge to Kikwit still standing? What about the church which must be left behind? The schools which must be closed? The hospital? The printshop? How long will the missionaries be away from their posts?

But decisions must be made and quickly. . . .²³

Hurried packing . . . departures by plane and truck . . . and for the second time in five years the stations stood empty of missionaries. This time they fled to Leopoldville, where they found makeshift living quarters in missions, or rented such apartments and houses as could be found.

As soon as possible the Missionary Aviation

Fellowship (MAF) ran air checks on mission stations in the area. They found some untouched, others with evidence of looting and disturbance, still others burned down. Bob Kroeker wrote, "Most of the village chapels and out-schools in rebel territory have been burned to the ground. Four of our mission stations were destroyed." Actually three stations were in ruins: Matende, Lusemvu, and Kafumba, though in the Gungu area village after village was burned down.

When the jeunesse came to Kafumba they threatened the pastor, then looted the dwellings. They demanded medicines of a nurse: when he refused to give it, they beat him and looted the dispensary. At each recurring visit they forced Pastor Timothy and the students who had not managed to escape to kneel with their hands in the air, the rebels standing around them with bows drawn. The rebels would then issue crazy commands which had to be quickly obeyed. They forbade the students to go to the river for water or to field or forest for food, or to signal the circling planes. When the students put out white flags anyway, the rebels ordered them out and were about to kill them--but the sudden arrival of government soldiers scattered the rebels and saved the students. Most of the Kafumba people were later evacuated. Pastor Timothy fled to the forest, where he existed for a year and a half.

The other people in the area had disappeared. They were in danger not only from the jeunesse but from government soldiers, who would come in and shoot wildly at anything that moved. Stories of atrocities began to filter in. A Christian had to dig his own grave and stand up in it, to be buried alive. At some places almost all the villagers were forced to join the rebels, including some church members (many of whom later repented). One church member became a head executioner--he did not repent. As in the French Revolution, women played a decisive part in the executions, acting as witch doctors and naming those to be killed.

Rumors began to circulate that Dr. Paul Carlson of the Evangelical Covenant Mission was being held in Stanleyville and accused of being a spy. The story of violence in that city and of Dr. Carlson's death is

well known. He was one of about 135 priests and missionaries who were killed during the uprisings of 1960-1967.

Other stories, tales of God's protection, also came in. Leon, the bookseller in Gungu, was lined up with many others to be shot. "Soon I will be in heaven with my Lord," he thought, and looked up to heaven and raised his hand to God. The commanding officer asked sternly why this man was looking up. Someone meekly replied that this was a bookseller, a good man. The officer hesitated and then said, "Maybe we shouldn't kill him--let him go. The rest of them--lock them up. We will wait for further orders." In the end none of them were shot.

For many months people hid in the forests, living on kasava roots, greens, and berries, slowly starving. Many suffered so severely from malnutrition that even when relief finally came they were beyond help. A state official said, "We don't bring most of them out to the hospital because they will die anyway."²⁴

The Mennonite Central Committee was one of the organizations to bring in relief supplies. John Kliwer, assisting in distribution, said, "Words seem so empty. With the aid program our words took on new meaning."

Slowly the rebels were pushed back. Kafumba, Matende and Lusemvu stood as empty shells, with nothing and nobody in them. Other stations, including Kajiji and its hospital, stood intact, and the national brethren were carrying on some activity. The Bible Institute moved from Kafumba, still a disturbed area, to Kikwit. At one place students had no school rooms and so were jammed into a tiny dark room, where they sat on planks and wrote on their knees, or they huddled into a corner of the drafty, open church building where they shivered in the cold winds of the rainy season. Their diet was meager, but they studied hard.

In Leopoldville the radio broadcast continued with many persons enrolled in the Bible correspondence course, including some government officials and even prisoners. Bookstores reported greatly increased sales; thousands of gospels of Mark and other literature were distributed. Carriers went even into rebel territory to put

books into hundreds of eagerly outstretched hands. One African remarked that God's word was "not sleeping but running faster than ever."

The day came when the Kafumba bell rang once more for church services. Christians came out of the forest, their black skins swollen, walking with difficulty. Teachers came back, among them Bernard Kasai, who had been buried up to his chest for two days before rescue came.

GIVE US ENCOURAGEMENT

"We must make a new beginning; we must build again on ashes and ruins." This from a Congolese brother who had lived through the ordeal of his people.

How, indeed, was the church to rebuild on its ashes and ruins? An estimated 2300 members had died violently or of starvation during the rebellions. The missionaries were not returning to most of the old stations. The whole country was troubled by confusion, by the demands of the youth, by materialism and a deteriorating economy--the Congo franc dropped from 65 to 400 to the dollar, and prices went up as much as 300%. Tribal enmities criss-crossed the country. The people of the interior feared both rebels and government soldiers--who as late as 1968 brutally killed some people in the Tschene area on some pretext.

Vernon Vogt has pointed out in a Christian Leader article²⁵ that the Lord had prepared the Congo church for this emergency in that though missions was only 80 years old (i.e. missions in general--Mennonite Brethren missions was 20 years old), Congo was one of the most intensively evangelized fields in the world. It had one missionary per 8000 people as compared to India, one missionary for 78,000. Including national workers the ratio was one to 700, compared to India's one to 14,000.

When independence was thrust upon the church, it continued to function, though with a feeling of vacuum. The Congolese welcomed returning missionaries but soon found that the missionaries were not taking up their old roles: they were insisting instead that national

brethren take up direction wherever possible. Some felt that the missionaries were avoiding responsibility. Certain legal, administrative, and technological posts had to be filled by missionaries; otherwise missions personnel were stepping back into the role of advisors and assistants. Even the Congo Protestant Council was now composed of nationals, with missionaries acting as advisors.

But as months went by, and as conferences and business sessions were conducted without missionary direction, and as people continued to be won to Christ and baptized, the churches realized that during their years of tutelage they had learned enough to carry on by themselves.

The Church: Carrying On, a 1970 field report, sets church membership at something over 9000 in nine or ten areas, with some 60 churches and 88 outposts. The churches have their own national pastors or leaders. The rural churches, however, are far apart, and since there are not many ordained pastors, these men must make circuits to visit the villages, perhaps once every few months. Only ordained pastors may officiate at church rites and are therefore much in demand. (Licensing of lay preachers is a problem, says missionary Prieb, because it tends to get out of hand.) One recently ordained minister is Bernard Kasai, the teacher who was buried up to his neck during the rebellion. At the ordination service, lasting 3 1/2 hours, Mr. Mfumendende, son of a chief and a teacher at Pai Kongila, announced to the Pai Kongila church, "We will now have our own pastor to perform the ordinances such as communion, baptism, baby dedication and marriages!"

The churches operate with very little foreign subsidy. The report of an executive meeting in August, 1970, shows that requests were chiefly for roofs for church buildings. It is possible however that with the fusion of church and mission, the churches may need to work on a higher level and may need more financial help.

Budgets must be kept low because the average church member, if salaried, earns about \$20 a month; teachers get perhaps \$45. The average per capita income for the whole of Congo, in fact, is only \$87. Missionary Arnold

Prieb estimated that in the Mennonite Brethren area the average Christian's entire holdings would be worth about \$20 to \$30. The people are encouraged to tithe, but they tend to feel that they need not do so until they are "rich."

The country is wide open for evangelism. "I can't imagine a country that is more open," wrote former missionary John Kliever. An example is the Bakwese region fifty miles southwest of Kikwit. Back in 1933-34 when A. A. Janzen and Timothy Djimbo tried to work in that place, a strong Catholic leadership would not permit them to enter. Though the Catholic influence lost some power, repeated attempts to work there brought little response. Then one day in 1968 two elderly men stopped missionary Ivan Elrich and explained to him that their people of this same Bakwese area wanted the Mennonite Brethren to come. Timothy wrote later:

We ministered two days in the eight villages. There were about 750 people who heard us, but in all we found only one Christian. The people are very hungry to hear the gospel. They have given a place for a building where a pastor and teachers can live. They plead, "Don't let this place be without a pastor."²⁶

The Congolese in the village of Vunda, an oilpost not far from Kikwit, seemed indifferent after hearing the gospel so often, but after the rebellion, they too requested a teacher, interest stirred, and 41 were baptized.

In Kikwit, over a thousand Congolese signified their decision for Christ during a 1968 campaign. The Christ for All campaign, in progress in Congo for several years, was led by Willis Braun and his assistant John Makanzu, the first Congolese chaplain of the Congo Protestant Council.

Apart from campaigns like these, the response of the Congolese to the gospel tends to be individual, not group response as in some parts of the India field. The salvation story is the story of a man here, a woman there, a boy somewhere else: like the story of the village chief who, seeking forgiveness of sins in spite of what he could expect from old friends and from

witchcraft, said, "If they kill me, they kill me; but I want to begin a new life."

The church has pressing problems to face in the 1970's. The first, perhaps, is the fusion of church and mission which is now in progress. Papers have been presented to the Justice Department of Kinshasa requesting that the Congolese church take over incorporation. This means that the mission will "disappear," that all property except personal property and the American school and hostels will belong to the Congolese church. A contract for use of property by missions personnel will be worked out by a committee of four nationals and three missionaries.

The relationship of missionary to church has in fact changed permanently. The destruction of the mission stations, notably the large station, Kafumba, has caused mission personnel to settle in Kikwit and Kinshasa, except for hospital personnel at Kajiji and Pai Kongila. This move, which is good mission strategy, would have been more difficult had the stations not been destroyed. With missionaries residing in the cities instead of on the field, the nationals have no choice but to carry on their own work.

The working relationship between Congolese and missionary, though not always smooth, has generally been cordial. Missionaries are invited to Bible conferences, and pastors in their turn attend the Pastors' Institutes conducted by missionaries. "They are still willing to learn from those that will walk humbly among them and seek to be one of them," wrote former missionary John Ratzlaff. He said further of a recent conference attended by 99 men from four missions and eleven tribes,

I have not felt worthy of ministering to them. Some of these men have stood in their graves at the hands of rebels and been spared. Most get very little pay from their churches, yet carry on.²⁷

Some jobs formerly done by missionaries are now turned over to nationals. This move hastens indigenization and also cuts operating costs. In fact, over half of all Mennonite Brethren Conference work in Congo at present is "services," i.e. assistance in education,

medicine, agricultural and economic technology. The missionaries serve in Bible correspondence work, as doctors and nurses and teachers. Others are doing evangelism and church planting or women's work. But the major operations of church, school, and literature distribution are largely in the hands of the Congolese themselves.

A second problem is how to function effectively within the United Church of Christ of Congo. Though individual denominations are allowed to move with some freedom under this organizational umbrella, some feel that "misuse of centralization could restrict the freedom of individual churches to do their work as they feel under God they should do it."²⁸

A third problem is the emerging new leadership--the youth. The problem has been stated thus:

Traditionally Congo was led by older men. The old men in the village were the authority structure. In a fast developing country, it is the young men who are being educated. With education comes power, and the older men are losing their power to the younger men. . . . As younger men come into power because of education, they will challenge the relationship of church and mission.²⁹

Schools: New Patterns. The entire primary school system with 700 pupils and 200 teachers has been taken over by the church. Teachers and administrators through Junior High are Congolese. The mission supplies one part-time counselor and also serves as a channel for government subsidy until the church will become duly registered. School inspection and handling of funds is in the hands of nationals.

The same arrangement is being worked out for secondary schools, with about 650 students at Kikwit, Kajiji, Kafumba, Gungu, Panzi, and Pai Kongila. In 1969 these schools were staffed by ten missionary and sixteen national teachers. That year the secondary schools operated on about 50% mission subsidy and 40% government subsidy. The report of an August, 1970 executive meeting recorded some discontent that not more government subsidy had been obtained as yet.

On the northwest edge of Kinshasa³⁰ stands a sign

reading, "E.T.E.K., L'Ecole de Theolgoie Evangelique de Kinshasa." Painted out but still showing faintly are the words, "will be constructed here." For where only a year ago stood six insignificant buildings in the midst of manioc gardens, today rises Congo's newest and largest school for pastors. It has seven faculty homes, a 40-bed men's dormitory, and 60 married students units. There are eight classrooms, administration building, projection room, lab, and library. This bold new venture is being carried on jointly by 10 churches, including the Mennonite Brethren, with a combined membership of 300,000. Students come from 15 tribes. ETEK now replaces the pastor training school in Kajiji. The stated purpose of ETEK shows an awareness that the church of Congo is not so much its leaders, either national or foreign, as its people:

ETEK feels that the crisis in the life of the Congo Church is not basically one of leadership at the top, but rather one of a vital involvement of the individual church member in the total life of the church. ETEK's thing is to train a leadership that can bring members into direct contact with the Word, so they handle it, discourse with it, listen to it, and respond to it personally--for the Word is Christ.³¹

TASOK, or the American school of Kinshasa, is another joint project by the business, international, missions, and embassy communities. The school now enrolls 500 students--50% missionary children and the others from the general community--and a staff of 30 teachers. "Teachers are generally excited to be able to teach at TASOK," wrote Mark Siemens after his Christian Service assignment there; the intellectual average of students is high, and the international flavor of the school is stimulating.

Ecole Belle Vue is now being used for dormitories for the girls in the medical school at Kajiji and in the secondary school.

Medical Work: Not Yet Congolese. The 140-bed hospital at Kajiji and the 400-bed hospital in Pai Kongila are staffed by Mennonite Brethren personnel: 4 doctors, lab and X-ray technicians, 25 nurses, ward

aides. Of these, the four doctors and seven nurses are missionaries.

The nurses' training school at Kajiji was recently rated among the five best among the 48 visited by a government team. In June of 1970 the following were graduated: 8 fellows, public health; 3 girls, midwifery; 4 fellows and girls, hospital nursing. There is no prospect for a national doctor.

About one of the other dispensaries Katy Penner wrote:

The Matende dispensary has not functioned since the '64 rebellion. Now the building has been repaired and the community is begging for a nurse. It is a difficult task, no doctor to write orders, no other nurse to consult with, only to dig in and work. We need to support Sefu as he will be going there to set up the medical work.³²

Radio and Literature: Needed for the Future.

"There is an almost unbelievable desire on the part of Congolese to get reading materials in their hands," wrote a mission administrator after visiting Congo. People come out of the bush shouting for something to read. Everyone from high official to poor peasant wants to learn to read. Without advertising campaigns or gaudy jackets, the books sell.

The stress is now on Congolese-written material, since translation of foreign writing does not appeal to the African, its concepts and illustrations being unfamiliar and unsuitable. Institutes for writers are being held, and a small amount of national-written material is coming out. New titles published in 1969-70 include:

- Women's devotional book
- Revised songbook and S.S. teachers' manual
- First Steps of a Christian, in two languages
- The Great Reformer Luther (revised)
- Testimony of a Congolese Pilot, in three languages
- Four Bible Correspondence Courses, in three languages
- Kituba English-French dictionary

This material is mailed to distribution centers or sold in the Centre d'Information Chretienne Librairie, the Christian information center in Kinshasa. The printing

proper is done by LECO³³ Here at the Information Center are bookstore, reading room, receptionist office for the correspondence school. From this point Mr. Ngoma Jonas, a colporteur, visits many churches in the city to sell Bibles, song books, Christian material of all sorts. In fact, the Center is the only place where many people can get this type of literature.

Radio broadcasting grew until in 1969 six different programs were being aired: a daily Kituba and daily Lingala program over ELWA, four programs in French, Kituba and Lingala over regional and provincial radio stations. The ELWA broadcasts alone had a potential audience of over 8 million. All nationally-aired programs were free, the ELWA broadcasting cost something over \$7C00 a year. These broadcasts were supervised and produced by the Arnold Priebs with the help of Pastor Mybaybul (radio pastor), Nduku Andre, Yongo Antoine, and others.

This heavy schedule has recently been cut back, partly as an economy move and partly to lighten the institutional burden to be carried by the national church. ELWA will carry the French program free of charge for its potential audience of 150 million. At the same time that the board cut back, the government also cut all its provincial and national programs. Arnold Prieb said that in September, 1970, he pinned a notice to the door of the radio office, "Closed indefinitely."

Radio does have a future, however. Government subsidy may be obtained for some programs. The Congo Protestant Office has written to ask that the Mennonite Brethren programs be the spiritual voice of Protestantism in Congo--that is, the voice of the newly formed union of all Protestant churches in Congo.

Meanwhile, the Bible correspondence courses in four languages have a wide circulation. There are 3000 enrollees actively working on them, reported Mr. Prieb--and that figure does not include people who have written for the course but who are not actively studying. About 88% of the enrollees profess to be Christians, 80% are in the Mennonite Brethren area including Kinshasa. Fees paid by students cover cost

of stamps and the courses; subsidy goes mostly for salaries.

Congo has emerged as a nation. The church has also emerged. Dr. David Barrett, who serves with an ecumenical research unit in Kenya, has predicted on the basis of some authoritative statistics that whereas the Christian churches will double in size during the twentieth century, the Third World or Younger churches will multiply seventeen times. That is, the center of Christianity will shift southward. This trend, he says, is seen most dramatically in Africa, where the rate of Christian growth is calculated at 5.2% and where converts display vital commitment and zeal.³⁴

If this is true, the direction missionaries travel may become dramatically reversed, and Congo may be sending missionaries not only to her own continent but to countries all over the world.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹James E. Bertsche, "Kimbanguism: A Challenge to Missionary Statesmanship," Practical Anthropology. Vol. III, No. 1 (Jan.-Feb., 1966), p. 15.
- ²Sam Bergen, Letter, October, 1970.
- ³Susie Brucks, Christian Leader, July 15, 1957, p. 6.
- ⁴Christian Leader, January 15, 1951, p. 4.
- ⁵Christian Leader, April 1, 1951, p. 5.
- ⁶Arnold Prieb, Christian Leader, June 15, 1951, p. 5.
- ⁷Christian Leader, July 15, 1956, p. 6.
- ⁸C. Redekop, Christian Leader, December 1, 1952, p. 4.
- ⁹Christian Leader, February 1, 1956, p. 7.
- ¹⁰Christian Leader, January 15, 1955, p. 6.
- ¹¹Irvin Friesen, Christian Leader, June and July issues, 1958.
- ¹²Christian Leader, August 15, 1955, p. 6.
- ¹³Christian Leader, June 15, 1956, p. 7.
- ¹⁴Christian Leader, November 18, 1958, p. 6.
- ¹⁵Christian Leader, March 24, 1959, p. 6.
- ¹⁶Christian Leader, January 15, 1957, p. 8.
- ¹⁷Christian Leader, March 24, 1959, p. 12.

¹⁸From Elkhart Truth quoted in Christian Leader, April 7, 1959, p. 8.

¹⁹Christian Leader, May 3, 1960, p. 6.

²⁰Christian Leader, January 19, 1961, p. 7.

²¹Christian Leader, May 16, 1961, p. 8.

²²General Conference Yearbook, 1966. See also "Arrows and Angels in the Night," Christian Leader, March 31, 1964, pp. 8ff.

²³"Congo in Crisis," Christian Leader, March 3, 1964, p. 6.

²⁴Christian Leader, May 11, 1965, p. 9.

²⁵Vernon Vogt, Christian Leader, May 16, 1961, pp. 8-9.

²⁶Mennonite Brethren Herald, December 13, 1968, p. 11.

²⁷Mennonite Brethren Herald, November 15, 1968.

²⁸Christian Leader, January 27, 1970, pp. 6-7.

²⁹Christian Leader, January 27, 1970, p. 7.

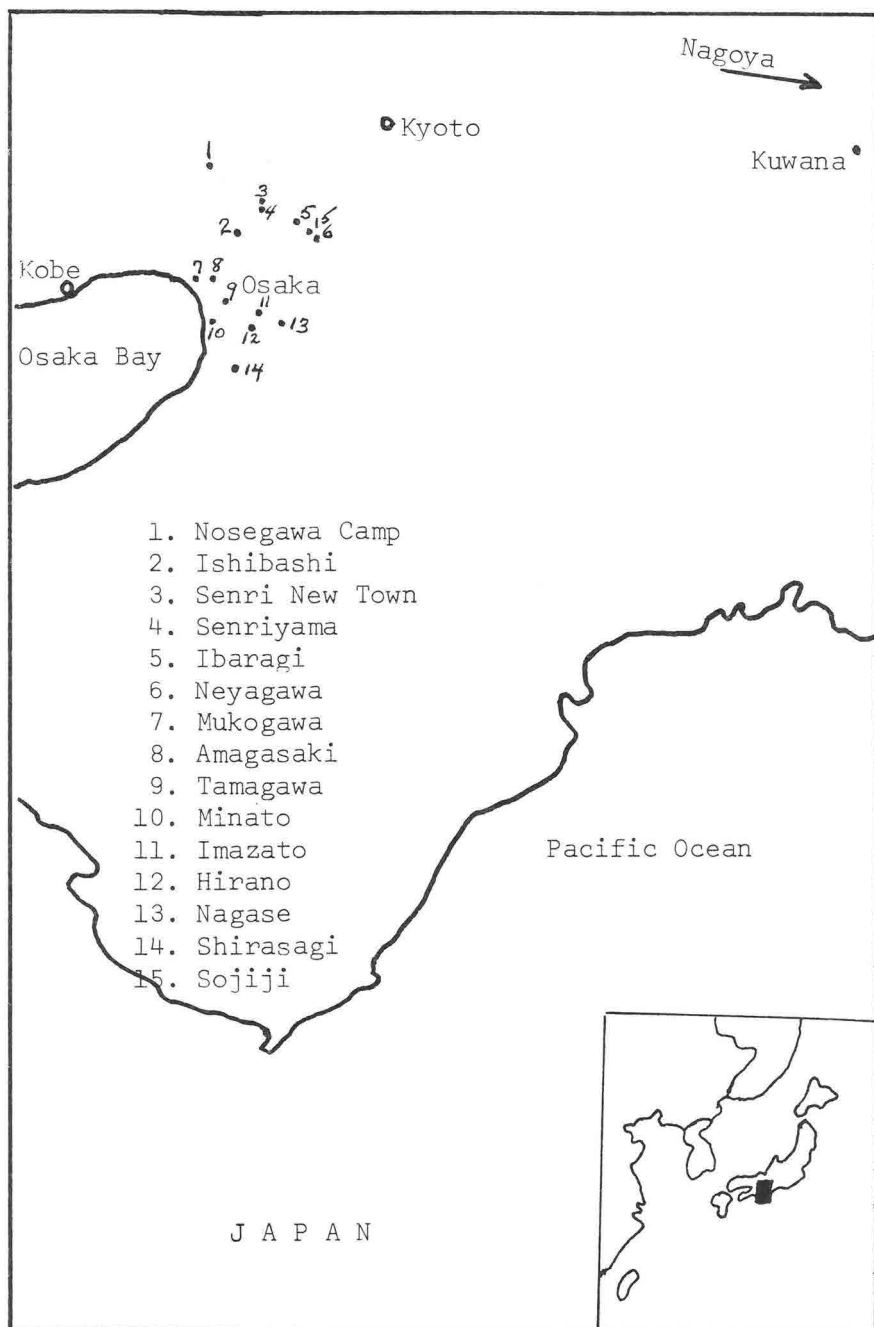
³⁰Congo cities were renamed in 1966 under Mobutu: Leopoldville is now Kinshasa, Stanleyville is Kisangani, Elizabethville is Lumumbashi, etc.

³¹Bulletin from Board of Missions/Services, February 23, 1970, adapted from the Congo Missionary Messenger.

³²Katy Penner, Letter, October, 1970.

³³LECO is a cooperative printing operation in which Mennonite Brethren hold shares along with a number of other organizations.

³⁴Christianity Today quoted in Mennonite Brethren Herald, January 9, 1970, p. 18.



Chapter 5

JAPAN: THE FORTRESS

Modern Japan, like ancient Japan before it, is like an island fortress whose rock cliffs rise in a formidable challenge to the Christian faith. Buddhism and Shintoism, supported by a traditional family ritual, have for centuries resisted the gospel of Christ, and do so now. Lack of knowledge and a modern indifference block the way of the messenger of peace. Narrow indeed are the crevices by which one may enter that citadel of islands, washed along all their shores by the isolating sea.

Those Christianizing forces which earlier succeeded in penetrating the islands found scant welcome. True, when Francis Xavier brought Catholicism to Japan in 1549 he succeeded in winning many in that feudal Buddhist society. But later on, growing suspicious of Catholic involvement in politics, and fearing the military power of Spain and Portugal, and distrusting the growing number of converts, the rulers of Japan outlawed the Catholic faith. For 250 years Japan was closed to all foreigners--traders, missionaries, everyone.

When in 1853 Commodore Perry forced Japan to open its harbors for trade, missionaries came close behind. These were mainly from liberal missions which emphasized education and medicine. The Japanese, always mindful of culture and now open to learning from the outside world, were glad for the building of schools. Some came to Christ. During World War II the churches were forced to form a united church called the Kyodan, which often yielded to government pressure to accept such Shinto compromises as worship of the Emperor. Many pastors had to join the army and never returned. Churches became empty or struggled merely to retain a membership; and the work of foreign missions in Japan ground to a halt.

The frightful experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki proved to the Japanese that isolation and military expansionsim would not do, that they must rebuild their

entire society under the direction of the West if they were to survive. Japan was open. And MacArthur was calling for missionaries.

A veritable flood of missionaries responded--some 1350 Catholics and 850 Protestants. The Mennonite Brethren conference, too, awoke to opportunity: A. E. Janzen, secretary of the Mission Board, said, "The time to work in Japan is now." In 1950 Ruth Wiens was sent as their first missionary.

Ever since then the Mennonite Brethren have been building what might be called an encampment or a series of outposts in and around the great city of Osaka, on Honshu Island. Osaka is in fact a center for many missions. About 100 missionaries of various denominations are at work, about half of them in church planting and the others in education, medicine, administration, or publishing. Of the sixteen M.B. congregations, fourteen are in this area. From this city go forth Christian messengers, literature, and radio programs to all of central Japan and even farther.

Osaka is a modern city. It has the largest international airport terminal building in the orient, handling some 11 million passengers in 1970. It has underground shopping centers and a new network of overhead and surface expressways completed for EXPO '70. It is also an ancient city, with a majestic feudal castle rebuilt after the destruction of World War II; and many old Japanese dwellings and shrines dating back hundreds of years. In Osaka, as in all Japan, the old and the new meet and compete for the attention and the hearts of the Japanese people.

PENETRATION

The twenty years of Mennonite Brethren work in Japan might be summed up as a search for people and for property. How to contact those people who might respond? And how to obtain property?

Japan is densely populated--110,000,000 people, or 600 people per square mile as compared to 52 in the U.S.--and housing is very scarce. The Japanese government requires a guarantee that missionaries will be

taken care of during their stay in Japan before granting visas. The search for adequate dwellings, therefore, and for meeting places has been a continuing problem.

When Ruth Wiens went out, the mission board was able to buy a 12-room house in Ikeda City, a suburb of Osaka, found through the efforts of MCC workers H. G. Thielmans, who were already in Osaka doing relief work. The Ikeda house was roomy and centrally situated: 14 miles from the MCC headquarters, 20 miles or so from the large cities of Kobe and Kyoto. Within a year or two this house became the dwelling of eight adult missionaries and six children: Ruth Wiens, Rubena Gunther, the Harry Friesens, Harold Gaedes, and Roland Wienses (Roland and his family had lately escaped from China and elected to work in Japan rather than give up their mission work).

The next purchase was a campground beside a river; in the hills seven miles north of Ikeda. Japanese people living in the crowded city enjoy the quiet of hills and trees, and camping appeals to them. A brochure sent out offered "Bible classes, special speakers, films, music, discussion, Christian reading room, horse shoe, tennis, volley ball, croquet, badminton, baseball, English conversation." The camps conducted here have always been well attended.

The search for property went on. Meeting places for groups of believers were, and still are, a major problem. To hold services in private homes is difficult because houses are small and not so open to guests as the average American home. Often several family units live together, and rarely are all members Christians. The same room may serve as dining, living, and bedroom. Then there are social customs: upon his first visit to a home the guest is often expected to bring a gift (a custom which must be changed if there are to be meetings), while on all occasions the host is expected to serve tea and cookies or other light refreshments. There are those who hesitate to attend services because they cannot reciprocate with an invitation to their home, as would be expected in Japanese etiquette.

But public halls are difficult to rent and prices

are generally high. There are usually no permanent arrangements--reservations must be made month by month, meeting by meeting. Ever since the Sokka Gakkai and other "New Religion" groups rented halls for their noisy and radical meetings, owners have by and large refused to rent to any religious group whatever.

To buy or build is extremely costly, since land is scarce and construction very expensive.

In the end, the Mennonite Brethren used all three methods. Eleven congregations now have church buildings, five rent rooms or halls, and some weekday Bible classes are held in homes. Tents are occasionally used for evangelism. The Christians simply use any means possible in order to gather together.

"ONE HERE AND ONE THERE"

The other great problem was to find people who would respond. In the highly literate, sophisticated society of post-war Japan there was not going to be a mass persuasion of people. They did not seem to respond by groups, rarely even by families. They would have to be sought out singly, by one's and by two's, somehow.

Soon after Ruth Wiens arrived, an English professor from the local university came with some students to visit her and to present her with a large bouquet of lilies and carnations. The flowers meant that the guests had a request which she must consider; to refuse the bouquet would have been a grave insult. The request turned out to be that Ruth teach an English conversation class in a downtown school for office workers and students. Miss Wiens accepted.

Three weeks later a young man named Arita san (the word "san" is equivalent to "Mr." or "Mrs." or "Miss") told Miss Wiens that he was not inwardly satisfied--would she teach him the Bible? After some weeks he came to Christ: now, he said, he was satisfied. Another young man, Mori san, wished to become a minister but was burdened with family responsibilities, and was also ill with tuberculosis. He has since recovered and is now a Christian layman. Ujiki san, a 17-year-old

orphan, shy but with great linguistic ability, also came to Christ and became an interpreter for Youth for Christ.

Through the English-teaching approach these and other men came. Manabe san is now preparing to train in the U.S. for Bible translation work in Vietnam. Nakano san came to Sam Krause's church to learn English; he is now in charge of the church in Senriyama.

The English language approach had its limitations, however. It was confined to young people, usually young men, who though much needed in the church were not a stable population. Ways must be discovered to reach the rest of society--women, children, business men, rural people.

General church outreach seemed to be an answer. The first church services were held in Ishibashi in May, 1951, in a rented community hall, with an attendance of 20 adults and 40 children. Two weeks later a Sunday school was begun. Since that time the major effort of the Mennonite Brethren has been to plant churches and Sunday schools in as many communities as possible. The church is seeking first of all to reach, not merely the children nor the student group, but the family.

The necessity and yet the difficulty of finding families was early noted by missionary Harold Gaede:

It is twice as hard to reach a university student as it is to reach a child. It is twice as hard to reach an adult as it is to reach a student. Even when these mothers are saved, they seem to be only half the Lord's until their family also finds the Lord.¹

Women had difficulty coming to Christ because in earlier days they were slaves in the home and had little free time. Now women are given a greater place in society, but cooking school, flower arranging school, PTA and other activities take their time, so that younger women still have little time for spiritual affairs. Furthermore, married women are in charge of family ritual: they tend the godshelf (Buddhist) or the ancestral tablets (Shinto) and are therefore put in a difficult position should they become Christians.

To the husband, the job or the company comes first.

He will put in long hours and serve his company without reservation. Those who have "made it" go in for golf on weekends. Men also, therefore, find little time and need for religion in their lives.

Children who want to be Christians often face opposition from Buddhist or Shinto parents, or parents who have other ambitions for them. Sonoyama san, for example, tried Zen Buddhism, then Mao's Thoughts and Communism, but at length became a Christian. When he wrote his uncle that he was going to seminary instead of joining his uncle's export-import company in Bangkok, the uncle wired him back, "Man, you're crazy!" (the two were later reconciled). Young people must often choose between their faith and a job, or resist pressures of marriage customs according to which parents arrange the match.

To win families, the church is trying a multiple approach of children's classes, youth work, women's gatherings, cooking classes, science films, Sunday services, Christian camps. Women's luncheons with a carefully arranged program of Christian speakers have recently been a resounding success.

All in all, present congregations are well balanced, reports Mrs. Roland Wiens. Jonathan Bartel writes:

Through laying strong emphasis on the salvation of both husband and wife we believe the Lord has given us some very stable congregations. Often there have been just as many or more men than women.²

Moreover, after twenty years of missions Christian marriages are becoming a source of strength.

Many Christian homes have been established by the young people in the churches marrying each other. Since the Christian young person can no longer depend on his or her parents to find their mates, the pastors and elders in the churches must help in this very important work of matching.³

The backbone of church expansion is, of course, constant personal witness. "Personal work is the missionary's closest contact with the people and a 'must' in his ministry,"⁴ wrote missionary Gaede. Mrs. Harry Friesen told about two telephone repairmen who several

times interrupted their Christmas Eve preparations:

That night we were just about ready for a welcome early-to-bed when the doorbell rang and here were the telephone men again, bearing in their hands a Christmas cake as a gift to us. They said they had been impressed with the atmosphere of our home . . . and that night--Christmas Eve--they asked the Lord Jesus to be their Savior. We went to bed late but very happy.⁵

Kurita san, a young man nicknamed "baseball fool" because of his passion for ball, decided to forsake that interest for a new one--Christ. He started Bible classes and Sunday school in his home. Later his parents became Christians, and after the grandmother died the family threw the godshelf out of the house during "Osoji" or village housecleaning time. Kurita san himself became an evangelist.

The familiar English class had continued to be effective with young people. Ruth Wiens, who started the first class when the bouquet of flowers was handed to her twenty years before, writes:

My english and Bible class on Sunday nights is my joy of life right now. I have a couple, Mr. and Mrs. Kubota, attending whom I think the Lord is going to bring through. They are both research assistants in our university. . . .⁶

Sam Krause writes, "Pray for Dr. Sakamoto, a member of the English Bible class who has many questions about the Bible. . . . One here and one there. Each one precious in God's sight."⁷ The Sojiji church, for example, began by way of English and Bible classes.

Thus by English class or personal contact, by luncheons or Sunday meeting or Bible class, the missionary and the Japanese Christian have sought out the people who would respond to Christ. They have come, as Sam Krause wrote, "one here and one there."

INFILTRATION: THE JAPANESE CHURCHES

Twenty years of witness by some twenty missionaries and by the Japanese believers has resulted in the following roster of churches, the first fourteen of them

being in the greater Osaka area.

Ishibashi is the largest of the churches, with a membership of about 120. This church is ten miles north of Osaka in Ikeda City. Some time ago when a four-lane highway came through, the congregation had to construct a new building two blocks from the original meeting place. Present pastor: Masaru Arita.

Tamagawa: the former Mennonite Central Committee center at Kasugade, near the water front, was sold to the mission in 1953 and became the first church home for this group. The old Mennonite Central Committee building has since been sold and the church moved to nearby Tamagawa. The radio followup office is situated here, and conference-wide meetings convene here because the location is convenient, near the center of Osaka City.

Hirano: this group began meeting at the Tsurugaoka mission home, a residence taken over from a former Friends missionary. Later a church was built in Hirano with lumber from U.S. army barracks. (When a U.S. army camp broke up in 1959, the wooden barracks were given to various missions. The gym and two barracks which were given to the Mennonite Brethren mission were dismantled and used to construct five churches: Ishibashi, Hirano, Kasugade, Nagase, and Amagasaki.)

Amagasaki is a small church in a large city of 350,000 near Osaka. It is surrounded by factories producing paint, ink, diesel engines, and the like. There is no other evangelical church for the 50,000 people in the immediate area of the church. Present pastor: Mr. Takenaka.

Nagase, in an Osaka suburb next to a university, was built when a landowner made a special price and postponed payment until money was available. Present pastor: Mr. Sato.

The Minato congregation meets in a very narrow remodelled two-story warehouse in this harbor area of Osaka. Pastor: Hiroshi Takeda.

Mukogawa, the second largest church in the Japanese conference, has a membership of about 80. This group began when Amagasaki divided into two congregations. Pastor: Mr. Ishiga.

Sojiji church is at the edge of a large apartment and residential area in an Osaka suburb. This group was begun by the Ben Zerbes through English and Bible classes. Pastor: Mr. Kurokawa.

The Neyagawa church, another suburb congregation, is led by Takao Nakamura.

Nosegawa Camp, the Mennonite Brethren campground: a small congregation is beginning to meet in the new housing developments near the camp, under the direction of Ivan Wohlgemuth and the camp caretaker, Mr. Abe.

Shirasagi is a pioneer work by the Sam Krauses and a seminary graduate, Mr. Nakanishi.

Senriyama, a recent work begun by Roland Wienses, is now under a national pastor, Mr. Nakano.

Senri New Town is a branch of the Senriyama group and is the church for which the Expo-Sure visitors from U.S.-Canada are raising funds. The group now rents a room in an office building on a monthly basis.

Imazato, a church in Osaka City, meets in a two-story warehouse and residence which have been remodelled. Pastor: Masaru Oyama.

Kuwana (a rural area): after Typhoon Ise Bay hit the Nagoya-Kuwana area, a joint Mennonite relief effort was set up in Kuwana. Bread and milk were distributed in schools, blankets were given out, clean-up work was begun. Missionary Rubena Gunther went to live and work there, with the result that a church has been established.

Nagoya is Japan's third largest city, about 100 miles from Osaka. This is one of the new pioneer areas under the present direction of Jonathan Bartels and a seminary graduate, Senichi Hamamoto.

"Help us evangelize Japan, we will take care of the churches," said Masaru Arita, the 1968 chairman of the Japanese Mennonite Brethren Conference. The churches are indeed taking care of themselves. Of the 16 churches and evangelism centers, 12 have fulltime Japanese pastors. Eleven churches receive no subsidy from U.S.-Canada and are responsible for their own

local operations and outreach.

The Japanese Conference, with a membership of about 1000, was organized in 1967 and is responsible for the camping program and radio followup as well as general administration. The new radio office in Tamagawa was a conference project. The 1970 budget of \$43,000 was raised mostly in Japan. U.S.-Canada provides some \$10,000 for radio time and student scholarships.

"Asa No Hikari," or "Morning Light," is the broadcast for which the Japanese conference is responsible. This 10-minute daily program was at one time regarded by the broadcasting station as the backbone of its forenoon program because it drew more listeners than even the music programs. Some 400,000 listeners tune in daily to this radio station. "Morning Light" has a potential audience of 35 million, including 200 leprosy patients on an island just off Honshu main island.

Television is a recent effort in the Japanese churches. At Christmas, 1970, a group of Christian people in Nagoya together with an international group of missionaries presented a 30-minute telecast over CBC-TV. CBC received nearly 1400 cards in response to an offer of free gifts (including New Testaments for the first 500 to write in). Jonathan Bartel wrote afterwards, "We are now beginning to think and plan for next year." TV is an especially significant medium in Japan because 96% of the people have TV sets; according to one report, the average person watches TV 22 hours per week. Mission strategist G. W. Peters has said, "If Japan is to be reached by the gospel, it will have to be reached by TV."

The problem of a seminary has been handed over to the Japan conference. An early Bible Institute at Kasugade grew into Osaka Biblical Seminary, a joint project of the Mennonite Brethren and two Baptist groups. Ruth Wiens and Harry Friesen have been teaching there, and all the pastors mentioned in the church roster are graduates of this school. However, when the mission offered to negotiate their interest in the seminary to the Japanese conference, the conference drew back, feeling that perhaps it might wish to create

a seminary of its own. Ruth Wiens wrote, "The Menno-nite Brethren Conference has decided to withdraw from OBS and start its own school as of next April. I think we must accept this as God's plan for our work in Japan."⁸ The new school began in April, 1971, in the Ishibashi church with one student.

The role of the missionary has been different in Japan than in India or Congo--perhaps because Japan has a highly industrialized, literate, and sophisticated society, perhaps because the Mennonite Brethren began their mission only in the 1950's when policies had shifted considerably from earlier times. In Japan the missionary has been primarily a church planter rather than educator, publisher, or doctor. He is mobile, not rooted to one "station" or area, but ready to move to a new location as soon as his work can be turned over to national brethren.

The Sam Krauses, for example, worked first in Tsurugooka or Hirano, then pioneered in Imazato, later in Shirasagi. Jonathan Bartels began work in Kasugade, then moved successively to Ishibashi and Nagoya. Roland Wienses have worked in Amagasaki, Mukogawa, and Senri-yama. At each retreat of a missionary, a Japanese pastor was left in charge.

Another type of missionary is the teacher hired by the Japanese university. The Bob Ennses, Pauline Peters Kliever, and for a time Rubena Gunther have gone to Japan under a self-supporting, associate arrangement with the mission, to work through English Bible classes or through IVF (KKG in Japan) and Campus Crusade. Bob Enns comments, "I think that there is a place for this kind of ministry--though specific arrangements, programs and relationships with the mission and conference have yet to be worked out."

The strength of the Japanese church lies probably in several factors. One is the clustering of small congregations in one major area, making possible the fellowship which is impossible, for example, in the Mexico churches. Jonathan Bartel wrote, "I believe this has been possibly the main factor contributing towards a strong national conference with unity and solidarity."⁹

A second strength is the determination of the Japanese leaders. Concerning Mr. Arita, chairman for some time of the conference, Ruth Wiens wrote:

Mr. Arita, the man who really shoulders the responsibility, is the type of man who would rather be a layman than carry the stigma in any way of being a professional clergyman. He would just as soon not receive a cent of money from America. Prestige, degrees, position, status carry no appeal to him. Rather he would just be a vessel which the Holy Spirit fills and uses . . . an extremely intelligent person who can see through you as if you had a glass window in front of your heart. He has become very bold in speaking where reprimand needs to be made. . . .¹⁰

A third strength is the freedom of the Japanese Conference to go its own direction, since organizationally it is entirely independent of the mission. Jonathan Bartel commented:

Organizationally, both actually and legally, the Japan M.B. Conference and the M.B. Mission are entirely separate. We have a very close working relationship and we as a mission will not start a work without full understanding of our national brethren and the blessing of the Conference on us. This way the missionaries can't "lord it over them" and we as missionaries do not have to become involved, at least not deeply, in their mistakes and problems.¹¹

This separation of church and mission is particularly fortunate in view of the rising feeling of nationalism and independence in Japan, an opposition to being directed from the outside. One Japanese brother recently remarked that the JMBC used to be a colony of the American Mennonite Brethren church. But this it no longer is.

A fourth strength of the present church, one it did not possess in the beginning, is suggested by Bob Enns:

It seems to me that a further significant factor; in the growth and stability of the work has been the winning of several kin groups--extended family units

as well as nuclear units. In group-oriented Japan, this is crucial--perhaps more so than the gathering of individuals through personal decision.¹²

It is this stability of conference and church which makes it possible both for the missionary to play his role of the flexible, mobile church planter and for the churches to carry on their own resident programs.

MODERN JAPAN: THE UNSURRENDERED FORTRESS

It would appear from the great influx of missionaries after the war and from the rising number of Christian congregations that Japan is a much-evangelized, wide-open country.

Not so. The fortress still stands formidable and rocky. The openness of the post-war years was soon replaced by confusions and by reluctance to hear the gospel, partly because the great variety of sects and denominations which entered Japan at that time brought confusion instead of light. "They did not accept the Christ of Christianity because there was not a united front in the presentation of Christ," wrote Roland Wiens in 1952.

So great was the frustration of the people that in about mid-1952 the Japanese papers reported the suicide rate at an all-time high--66 per day. A tidal wave of pleasure-seeking, hedonism, and freedom-seeking began to roll over the country. In an unparalleled rush into industrialization, Japan rose from the prostration of World War II into the fastest-growing economy of the modern world. (It has in fact been predicted by expert Herman Kahn of Hudson Institute that by the end of this century, if not sooner, Japan will be the world's first economic power.)¹³ The resulting stress on goods and wealth has taken hold of Japan much as it has the U.S. The status-seeker's aim is to possess the three C's: car, cooler, and color TV. Bob Enns comments that "a secular, materialistic 'reductionism' following a period of great technical and economic progress presents a significant obstacle to the progress of the gospel. 'Secularism' seems to follow science--and Japan doesn't seem to be an exception."

Renewed interest in Japanese tradition has further complicated the penetration of the gospel into Japanese society. The recent suicide of Yukio Mishima apparently occasioned a re-examination of the values of contemporary Japan and a new openness to the old military virtues of self-discipline, dedication, and nationalism. Part of this national revival is a new surge of interest in Buddhism and Shinto, and in the "New Religions" with Buddhist, Shinto, and even Christian elements. The government has in fact made moves to support some Shinto shrines as national monuments--an action from which one may gather that politics, culture and religion are so inter-related in Japan that nationalism and revival of old religions are hard to separate.

Soka Gakkai is a relatively new "religion," less than forty years old, but it is now expanding at a furious rate and claims not only the allegiance of thousands of followers (one in ten Japanese) but a significantly large sector of the political machine--by 1970 it had emerged as the third largest political party. Soka Gakkai leaders are now building the largest meeting place in the world near the foot of Mount Fuji.

Many young people who have not found these religions an answer to their search have taken up hippie life or have joined radical groups, political or otherwise. Followers of communism have succeeded in causing a good deal of disturbance, though as Jonathan Bartel points out, "Communism has not grown very rapidly because the booming growth of commerce and affluency has not been fertile soil for its growth." Japanese young people, like American young people, are searching, intense, disillusioned. Asked what they were looking for, Bob Enns replied:

A place in the world, economic and personal security, a chance to act out in a new way ideals that are not all that new, a sense of meaning and purpose. The rising standard of living has brought into being a "middle class" way of life--city apartment, "romantic love," nuclear family, corporation bureaucracy, gadgets, recreation--that is within the grasp of the many. Education is the means to this form of the good life--and the pressures to "make it" are

intense. There is a great interest in the current "style" in music, dress, architecture, social change. And these are "international" in a sense. So are the problems--loneliness, a meaning vacuum, despair with the "establishment."¹⁴

Japan remains the fortress--rugged, largely impenetrable, complex in its defenses. Within it a small camp of Christians seek to pitch their tents in city after city, suburb after suburb, in the name of the Conqueror.

FOOTNOTES

¹Harold Gaede and Ruth Wiens, Mennonite Brethren Missions in Japan, p. 28.

²Jonathan Bartel, letter, 1971.

³Ibid.

⁴Harold Gaede, p. 33.

⁵Mrs. Harry Friesen, letter, January, 1970.

⁶Ruth Wiens, letter, November, 1970.

⁷Sam Krause, letter, March, 1970.

⁸Ruth Wiens, letter, November, 1970.

⁹Jonathan Bartel, letter, January, 1971.

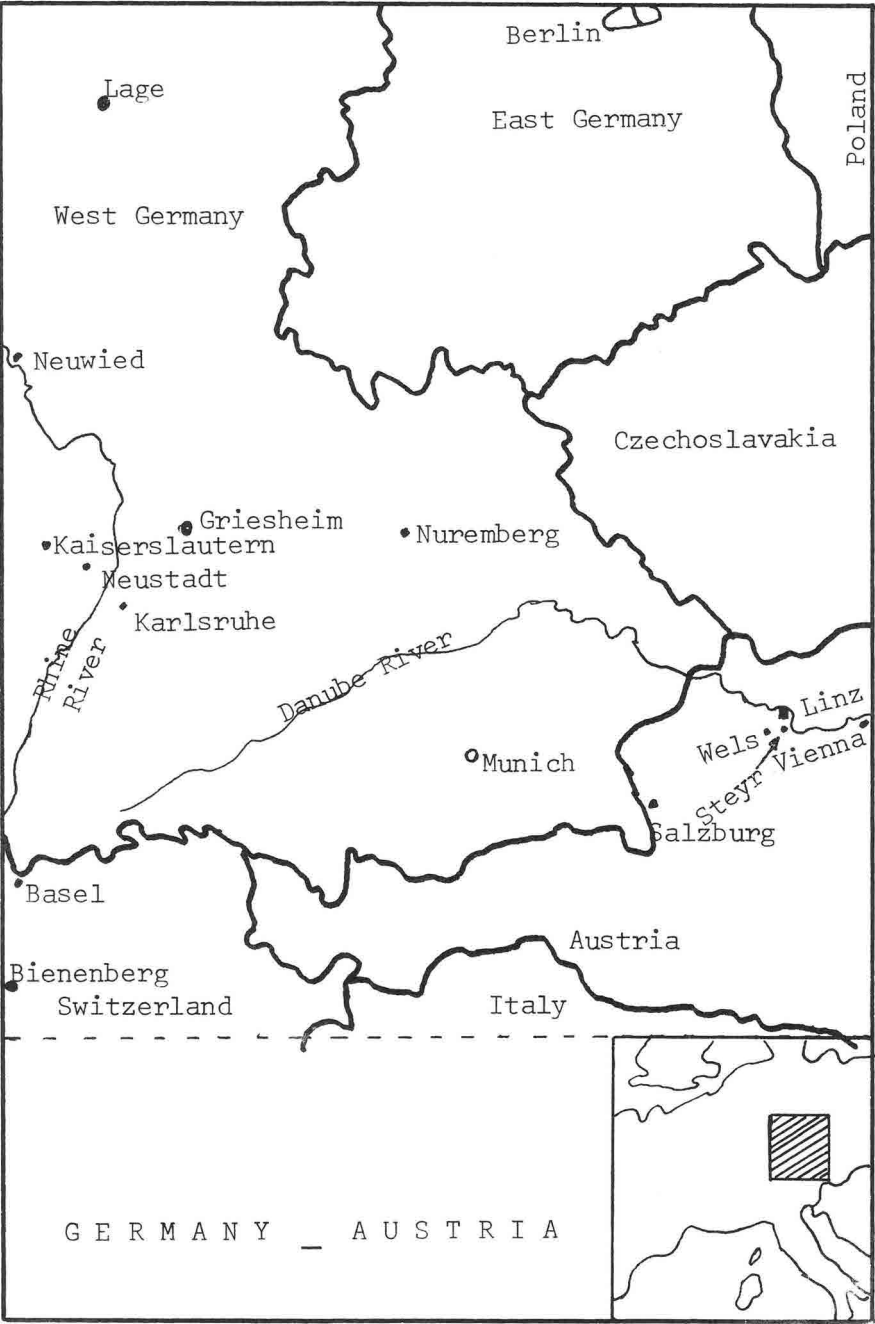
¹⁰Ruth Wiens, letter, 1970.

¹¹Jonathan Bartel, letter, 1971.

¹²Bob Enns, letter, 1971.

¹³Herman Kahn, Emerging Japanese Superstate: Challenge and Response (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970).

¹⁴Bob Enns, Letter, 1971.



EUROPE: THE RETURN

Through faith, says Paul, God cleanses our hearts. And so the fruits of righteousness follow out of an upright, unfeigned, pious Christian faith. Take note carefully.¹

The story of the Mennonite Brethren in Europe is part of the story of the whole body of Mennonites, which in turn is part of the still larger story of the Anabaptists. It is a dramatic story of persecution and escape, and then of the return to Europe four centuries later of those who had escaped, a return to their brethren who had remained behind, suffering now from the brutality of two world wars and bound in the traditions of a cold, formal church. This drama can be set out in three acts:

Act One: severe persecution of the Anabaptists and their escape to other places, including eventually the New World.

Act Two: the return of now prosperous Mennonites from America and Canada with relief goods for a war-stricken Europe.

Act Three: the return of the Mennonites of America and Canada with a spiritual ministry.

(Acts Two and Three overlap somewhat in that relief personnel gave spiritual encouragement and missions personnel occasionally gave out relief goods; but the main thrust of the one was material relief and of the other evangelism and church planting, so that the two may be thus separated.)

This story has unfolded in half a dozen cities of Austria and Germany where the Mennonite Brethren are presently active: Steyr, Linz, Salzburg, Vienna, Neustadt, Neuwied. It is these cities to which we will pay attention rather than to the whole drama as it took place over all of Europe.

Act One: Persecution and Escape

Early in the 16th century the Anabaptists were arousing the fury of both Lutheran and Catholic state churches by their insistence on such heretical doctrines as individual faith, adult baptism, separation of church and state, and the church as a community of believers. For these unwelcome views they were persecuted and driven from city to city, from country to country. But they persisted, and were joined by men of stature and education, including a Catholic priest named Menno Simons, from whom the Menmonites later took their name. The records of the struggle against the Anabaptists are still to be found in the archives of some of the old cities of Europe.

The ancient Austrian city of Salzburg set the pattern for severe persecution of the Anabaptists in the 1520's and after. Mandates warned against involvement with rebaptism and Anabaptists. Their books were to be burned. Giving shelter to the heretics was punishable by having one's house destroyed. Citizens were prohibited from discussing Protestant doctrines with travelers. Anabaptists themselves were to be burned, recanters were to be beheaded and then burned, sympathizers were to be drowned. Old records, possibly inaccurate, place the number of martyrs in Salzburg at 38.

Steyr, Austria, was another wealthy and proud city, famous as an industrial center. After the Reformation it became predominantly Lutheran. An Anabaptist congregation grew up in Steyr in the 1520's, but the city council, disturbed at the number of converts, imprisoned many and brought them to trial. Some 15 were executed and the danger from Anabaptism was thought to be over. But ten years later the council again had to take action, and the number of martyrs grew to 30. Around 1570 new trouble broke out with the dissidents when two influential families became sympathizers. One family was expelled, the other made peace with the city, and no more Anabaptist activity was recorded.

When the Anabaptists in Steyr were dispersed, Linz became a center for the new sect. Some were imprisoned,

and even more were killed than in Steyr. Later on the government tried to cope with the Anabaptists by way of instruction, being severe only on the stubborn; and in time the Anabaptist movement in upper Austria declined.

Although Vienna was never the scene of an Anabaptist congregation, so far as is known, at least 23 were executed there, including the outstanding leader, Hubmaier. Anabaptists came and went, until the Jesuit Counter-Reformation quelled the movement in that area, and no further mention of Anabaptism occurs in the records.

Neudstadt, Germany, a city with a long history dating back to the Roman occupation, records some evidence of an Anabaptist congregation in the 16th century. As for Neuwied, Germany, and other cities which are now centers of Mennonite Brethren activity, one may imagine the persecuted and fleeing Anabaptists seeking refuge, perhaps gaining a foothold, preaching and persuading everywhere they went.

Years later some of the followers of Menno Simons moved north to religious freedom in Russia, and still later to the greater freedom of the New World--to Canada, the United States, and South America.

Act Two: The Return--MCC and Relief

The 19th century brought civil war to Russia and the destruction of two world wars to all of Europe. The people were afraid, hungry, naked, confused, destroyed. In Canada and the United States the now prosperous Mennonites formed a relief organization called the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to bring what comfort and relief they could to their brethren in Europe, and as much as possible to other people also.

From Berlin, where the Mennonite Central Committee had rented a house for refugees to relieve the pressures a little, came a report of acute need:

We have a continual stream of refugees coming here to the Heim. They all come with the same story-- "We are refugees from the east, we lost everything we had, we have no work, food is provided us but

we have no clothes to wear, we want to go to west Germany or to America but can't, we don't know what to do." In many cases we don't know either what to do for them. When possible we give them something from our dwindling stock of clothes and shoes and otherwise direct them to Ringstrasse where most of the Berlin material aid is carried on. . . . It is a trail of misery left by the war.²

To some of the cities where once the Anabaptists preached, the Mennonite Central Committee now brought food and clothes, workers and encouragement.

Neustadt was the Mennonite Central Committee relief headquarters for the French zone of Germany during 1946-50. Here Elizabeth Wiebe, one of the Mennonite Central Committee workers, was interested in child evangelism and began to gather children for a Bible class in the Mennonite Central Committee house. When the Mennonite Central Committee pulled out, she continued her classes and added a weekly sewing and Bible study class for mothers, mostly war widows. To this beginning were added a women's Sunday school class, a prayer group, house visitation, and eventually a regular meeting of a group of believers. A home for children was started by the Mennonite Central Committee in 1949, ten miles north of Neustadt.

Neuwied was heavily hit during the war because it is on the Rhine River near the crossing point of the Allies and was, therefore, a continual war front. Mennonite Central Committee brought help to the 500 Mennonite refugees gathered in Gronau, where a Mennonite weaving and spinning factory provided large halls. The camp dissolved after many of the refugees left for the free world, and those who remained were advised to settle in Neuwied, a former Mennonite community. (All that remained of this community was a small bombed-out church and a few members.)

Refugees flocked into Austria as well. Within a radius of ten miles of Linz more than 20 camps housed 20,000 Germans from the Balkans. Living in barracks in pitiful conditions, they suffered loss of home and

family, and became either despondent, apathetic or hard-hearted. Unwholesome camp conditions produced in the young people a low moral level and spiritual blindness. Some relief came from the Austrian government, but little from outside agencies until 1952.

Mennonite Brethren relief efforts came to Linz, not through the Mennonite Central Committee, but through the mission board. Rev. H. K. Warkentin had been touring the Austrian refugee camps with films and preaching, and his report to the board back home moved them to begin work in Austria. John Gossens and J. W. Vogts were accordingly sent to Linz in 1953. Living quarters were so scarce that the Vogts had to live temporarily in a hotel room. It was difficult to start work since purely religious meetings were forbidden in the camps because of the many cults and societies which had already tried to get in. Permission for work had to be secured from the U.S. military authorities (Austria being still under occupation), from the Austrian government and also from the camp leaders. The Gossens and Vogts decided to bring in relief supplies and scientific and Bible filmstrips, and to register as a missionary and relief organization. Food and clothes were distributed; meetings were held; and a group of converts were baptized.

After World War II many Mennonite refugees settled in Vienna, and Mennonite Central Committee relief was begun in 1946, both for the Mennonites and for the general populace. The Mennonite Central Committee apparently did not go to Linz or Steyr with relief.

The work of the Mennonite Central Committee was the beginning of a return to Europe in a way the suffering people could understand--relief for overwhelming physical need. With this relief came also the small beginnings of a ministry to the even greater spiritual distress. Consider these statements:

One constantly meets people who through one or another channel received their first bit of relief through an MCC can of meat in 1946 with the words "In the Name Of Christ," after they had known only hatred or need for years. The impression was indelible.³

Europeans of various faiths have had the privilege of sharing in work and experience in the many aspects of our program. Many sensed the reality of Christian experience in a new way and often for the first time.⁴

The means God chose (for missions) was not the familiar mapping out of a geographical area and establishment of mission stations. God used the ministry of relief to give meaning and authority to the call of Christ upon people who had grown indifferent through traditionalism and formalism. A disillusioned people would have no more mere pious words.⁵

The way was now open for a concentrated spiritual ministry; it was time for the third act of the drama to begin.

Act Three: The Return--Evangelism and Church Planting

When in the wake of Mennonite Central Committee men came to Germany and Austria to preach the Good News of Christ they found themselves outside the state churches, much as the Anabaptists had four centuries earlier. Even some of the Mennonite churches which had eventually been established had likewise drifted into a dead formalism. Without the support of these churches, and moving in a sense around them, the men sent by the mission board in America toured and preached, showed films and spoke in tents or in homes, until here and there small groups of believers grew up.

The classes begun by Elizabeth Wiebe in Neustadt, Germany, had grown into a group of believers large enough by 1953 to rent a hall. The hall they found was a 300-year-old place once used as part of a monastery, then employed by Jews for a synagogue, and finally turned into a horse barn and junk room. The Mennonite Brethren group cleaned it out and renovated it for a chapel. The stone floor was covered with rough boards, and lumber was placed over the stone mangers for seats.

Someone remarked that the smell never quite disappeared.

This group organized formally under the guidance of the G. H. Jantzens in 1958. New quarters were needed, since after the war people no longer were living in make-shift dwellings but had good homes, and a place of worship in a dark and dingy Hof no longer looked attractive. The group decided not to build, however, and are now meeting in rented quarters. For one reason and another the membership has dwindled to about 20.

In Neuwied the place where only a bombed-out church and a few Mennonites remained and where the Gronau refugees went to live, a small new church was organized in 1950 with the help of Cornelius Wall and G. H. Janzen. Then more of the people left for Canada, leaving only 12 members. When the C. N. Hieberts arrived from the U.S. they spent many hours walking to visit the widely scattered families. Meetings were held in a rented Mennonite church every other Sunday, then in a Gasthaus (small hotel)--to the consternation of some who thought it sacrilegious to hold services in such a place. An outdoor baptism in 1954 aroused much discussion among lookers-on, reminding one of the furor over Anabaptist baptisms centuries earlier. The congregation finally purchased a Gasthaus at the edge of the city, near a bus line, with halls and living space sufficient for permanent quarters.

For some time Neuwied was headquarters for the Mennonite Brethren work in Europe--for conference, radio and literature work. Headquarters was later transferred to Griesheim and then to the Mennonite Haus purchased from the Mennonite Central Committee in Kaiserslautern.

Neuwied has since produced a missionary. A few years ago Wolfgang Rueschoff gave up a fine job to go to Bible school and then to Steyr, Austria, to minister in tent evangelism.

The background of war tragedy and hardship present in our European churches is suggested by the life of Waldemar Kerber, one of the deacons in Neuwied. Once a young soldier in the German army during World War II, he was taken prisoner by the Russians. He spent several years in a death camp, survived hard labor, hunger, and almost fatal illness, and lived to return to Germany,

exhausted and in rags. Through Cornelius Wall the man found Christ. He married, and in time he became a deacon in the Neuwied church.

The group of believers in the Linz refugee camp, where the Vogts and Gossens had been preaching and giving out relief, grew until attendance topped 100. The Vogts and Gossens left, and in 1955 the Abe Neufelds took over their work. The group purchased a lot some distance away from the camp so that the townspeople could attend, and built a chapel there. By the end of 1960 the Linz Mennonite Brethren Church had 25 members with many more people attending.

One of these was Anton, at one time a prisoner in World War I. He spent several years on the farm of a Mennonite family in Russia and after the war he returned to Austria. But Anton was restless, his religion he found unsatisfactory. He watched the Mennonite Central committee send in relief after World War II, and later the Mennonite Brethren workers carry on their evangelistic campaigns. He watched, and in time both he and his wife joined the converts. He said then that he had known there was something better but had not known how to find it. His wife added, "I'm just as if I'm just born anew."⁶

In 1958 H. K. Warkentin came to Steyr to preach and show his films. Abe Neufeld came in from Linz to help; and a group of some fifty believers began to meet. Rev. Warkentin then bought a building and had it remodelled into a chapel. Present membership under pastor Victor Timnick is about 20, mostly persons of Catholic background.

A spiritual ministry was begun in Vienna in 1949, and a small church now exists there. Salzburg, Austria, is a recent pioneer area for the Mennonite Brethren: the Don Ennses live in a high-rise apartment in Salzburg and have begun work.

From these half-dozen cities the work of evangelism and church planting is slowly expanding to other cities. Wels, Austria, with a present membership of perhaps 40, began when the Abe Neufelds came in from Linz. This church is the first of the European Mennonite Brethren churches to have a full-time pastor who has come up

through their own ranks--Georg Emrich. The Wels church has also sent out a missionary: Miss Schoetendreyer, who went to Colombia in 1966 to work under Wycliffe. The Lage, Germany, congregation (relocated here from Müssen) is the largest of the churches with its membership of about 100. Most of the members here are former refugees returned from South America or lately come from Russia and Poland. An outreach of the Wels church in Traunreut, has brought about a small congregation under the guidance of Lawrence Warkentin. A 1970 Conference report lists also delegates from Kaiserslautern, Brake, and Wien.

The Problem of Strategy

Evangelicals who wish to work in Europe have this first barrier to face: a state church which, whether Catholic or Protestant, dominates the religious scene. In a 1968 report J. A. Toews said:

To establish free churches in Europe is not an easy task. Perhaps in no other area of our conference outreach do we face such a formidable religious establishment.⁷

"The greatest barrier," wrote G. H. Jantzen, missionary to Europe, ". . . was tradition. With a church background they feel they have all that is needed."⁸

Southern countries like Austria, Portugal and Spain are predominantly Roman Catholic. Italy is 98% Catholic, though only a fourth of the people attend mass. France is 80% Catholic. (It is interesting to note that in Austria the roster of sects against which the Catholic people are warned includes, together with the Mormons, Adventists, Jehovah Witnesses, and Baptists, the Menno-nite Brethren and the Janz Evangelistic Team. Nevertheless Austria recognizes the Mennonite Brethren as a legal entity dating back to the 17th century.) Freedom of worship is generally permitted, however, and the church encourages reading of the Bible. In Soviet-controlled areas the churches are harmless.

Other countries are largely Protestant, as for

example Germany, 45% and Sweden, 95%. Of the Protestants, the Lutherans comprise 75% and the Reformed 18%, with Methodist and Baptist and other groups making up the remainder. Only a minority are actively evangelical. Congo, someone remarked, is better evangelized than Belgium. France has 35,000 towns without any evangelical witness.

Indifference, in fact, seems to characterize the state church whether Protestant or Catholic. A report from West Germany points out that the people, mostly those under 35, are leaving the churches in sharply increasing numbers. They apparently feel that the church does not represent their interest, does not take a proper role in world affairs, has unwelcome stands on mixed marriages, celibacy, and other questions. One newspaper asked, "Is God heading for unemployment?" and gave its own reply, "No answer, because many Christians don't even care about this question."⁹ Thus, as J. A. Toews points out,¹⁰ even if the old synthesis of church and state is beginning to disintegrate, what gain is made in Europe is immediately lost in the modern feeling of indifference.

After World War II tent evangelism was popular in the cities. Inter-denominational missionaries, while able to move without touching the establishment, did not try to start new churches since most people already had church connections. But their converts had no "believers" churches, and slowly policy and practice began to change. Many small groups now exist of believers dissatisfied with the large formal church. Reviewing these, G. H. Jantzen mentions the Gemeinschaft (Fellowship) within the State church of believers pursuing a more active faith; groups attending the meetings of evangelists who preach in tents in summer and rented halls in winter; those who sympathize with the work of some thirty mission groups in Europe (mostly in Germany) such as the Navigators, Evangelical Alliance, Baptists, Child Evangelism Fellowship, Youth for Christ, various Mennonite missions, the Janz team with headquarters at Loerrach. Furthermore, evangelical programs are aired by Luxembourg and Trans-World Radio, and active literature ministries exist in Belgium and other places. There are some

twenty Bible schools: four in Switzerland including Bienenberg, in which the Mennonite Brethren have an interest; five in Germany, including Brake; and others in England, France, and Belgium.

It is within this setting of moving with some degree of freedom around the state churches that Mennonite Brethren missions exists.

A second problem is that the Mennonite Brethren churches are too few and too small to carry a heavy financial or institutional burden. Total membership in the churches is a little over 300. Though officially recognized as a church, the European conference does not have the weight to make such demands as, for example, prime radio time on the state-owned stations. All free churches face this problem, whereas the state churches have free access to radio time.

The Mission board has therefore adopted the policy of working with established institutions rather than setting up duplicate ones. For instance, the European Mennonite Bible School in Bienenberg, Switzerland, and the Brake Bible School in northern Germany are schools well suited to train church leaders. Several Mennonite Brethren men are now teaching in these schools: Helmut Duerksen in Bienenberg, B. J. Braun at Brake. Rev. H. H. Janzen is on the faculty of St. Chrischona Seminary near Basel, Switzerland--an 130-year-old school operated by the St. Chrischona Pilgrim Mission. Mennonite Brethren young people attend these schools--about 12 in 1970--and students sometimes serve as apprentices in the Mennonite Brethren churches.

The Mennonite Brethren radio program "Quelle des Lebens," at one time released over Luxembourg Radio twice a week, has merged with "Worte des Leben," the Mennonite Hour program, since prime time was not available and the money invested might better be used in church planting.

With institutions more or less out of the way, the mission is able to give priority to church planting,

Strong encouragement was given to emphasize the establishing of church fellowships. This counsel came from the church councils, from other

organizations working in Europe and from North American workers.¹¹

Under this policy, the North American worker becomes a minister sent specifically to evangelize and plant churches: he is a temporary agent who moves on when this job is done at any specific place. The church program itself is carried on by local workers.

Paul Hiebert has remarked on the confusion of roles which is possible in Europe: the "missionary" is himself of German background and so identifies himself with the people, yet he is actually a foreigner. At conferences of pastors it has been the missionaries who represented both the national conference (being at that time the pastors) and the Mission Board. This confusion should be reduced considerably as mission workers work primarily in outreach, and local churches more and more find pastors from their own ranks. The missionary staff is in fact being reduced to perhaps three couples in Germany and three in Austria. One consequence of this move is given the 1970 report, Impact, sent out by the mission office:

This means that our sister churches in Germany and Austria will be releasing our missionary pastors. This will free our missionaries to start new churches elsewhere.¹²

Another consequence of this policy is greater stress on financial independence in the European churches. Roland Marsch wrote from Europe:

The pressure to become financially independent has been good for our churches. Members coming to us from the state churches are not used to supporting their own church program. The state pays pastors' salaries. One brother admitted that the shock had been uncomfortable, but good.¹³

The Bund der Europäischen Mennonitischen Brudergemeinde (Union of European Mennonite Brethren Churches) thus represents the permanent return of the Mennonite

Brethren to the land of their roots and heritage. The process of making their distinctives known and of setting up a working relationship with the Mennonites already there is now well begun.

What are their distinctives? J. B. Toews of the seminary in Fresno sums them up thus:

1. A concept of the church as a fellowship without positional recognition of clergy--i.e. elders and bishops.

2. A central concern for evangelical outreach beyond the immediate church and cultural community.

3. Retention of the historical peace position, which not all Mennonite groups share.

What is their working relationship with other Mennonites? G. H. Jantzen, missionary to Europe, remarked:

The relation between the Mennonite Brethren Conference in Europe and the Mennonites in Southern Germany and Switzerland is generally good and there is cooperation in the work.

The Dutch and northern German Mennonites, he goes on to say, are more liberal in their thinking, so that cooperation is minimal.

As the European Conference relies more and more upon its own initiative, the word "return" will cease to be apropos. The Mennonite Brethren work in Austria and Germany will be in the hands of the people who already dwell there, and the men from America will either be visitors or will be sent to spearhead new work in new places.

FOOTNOTES

¹Menno Simons, The Complete Writings of Menno Simons (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1956), p. 336.

²Christian Leader, February 15, 1951, p. 7.

³Christian Leader, January 1, 1952, p. 15.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Christian Leader, February 15, 1953, p. 14.

⁶Christian Leader, May 2, 1961, p. 1.

⁷J. A. Toews, Christian Leader, December 17, 1968, p. 8.

⁸G. H. Jantzen, Letter, 1971.

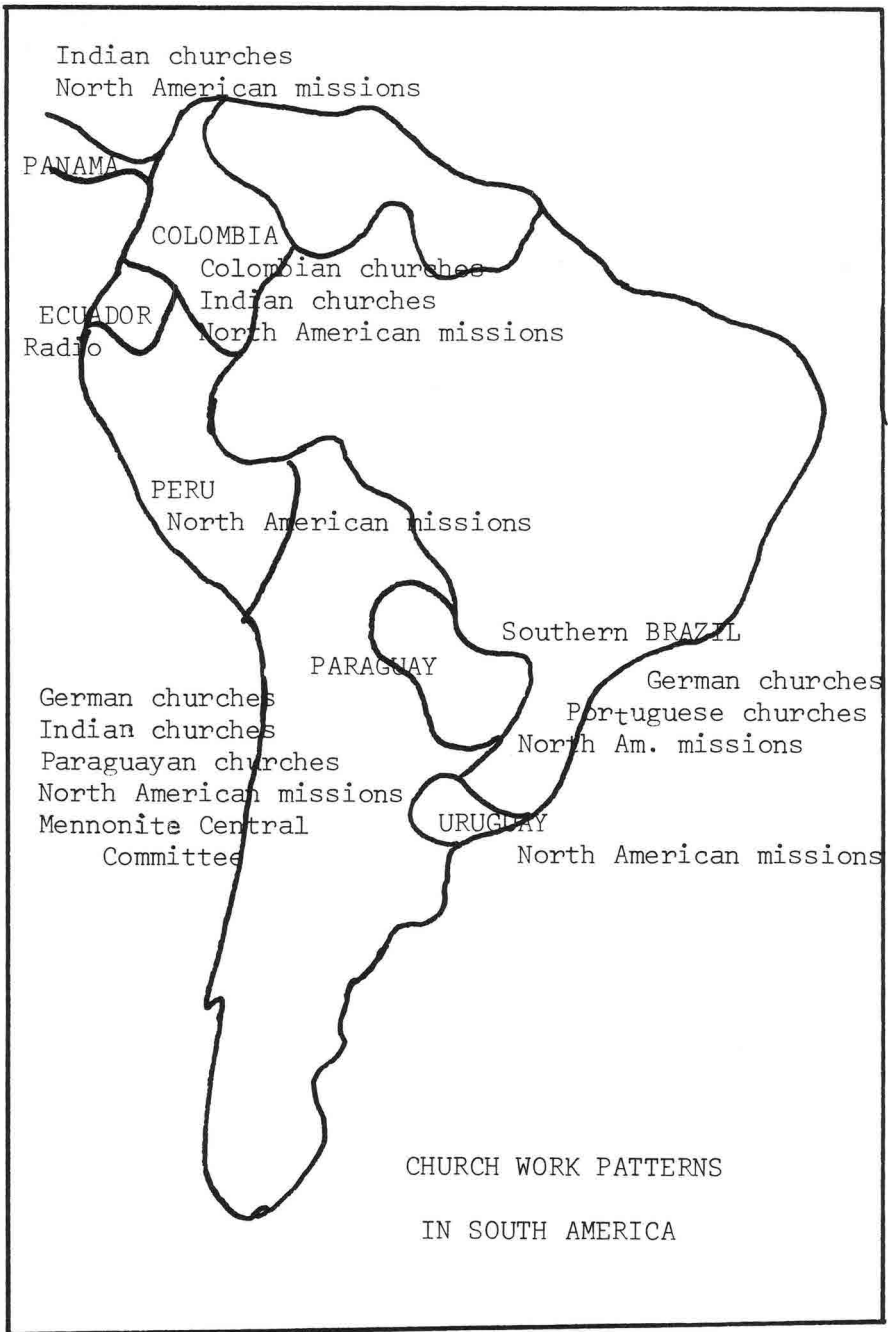
⁹Christian Leader, April 7, 1970, p. 18.

¹⁰J. A. Toews, Christian Leader, December 17, 1968, p. 8.

¹¹Christian Leader, December 30, 1969, p. 10.

¹²Impact, 1970, p. 7.

¹³Roland Marsch, Christian Leader, September 22, 1970, p. 11.



LATIN AMERICA: EXPERIMENTS IN
MISSIONS

Latin America is a mosaic of peoples who speak the Latin-derived languages of the Europeans who once conquered them; Spanish, Portuguese, and French.

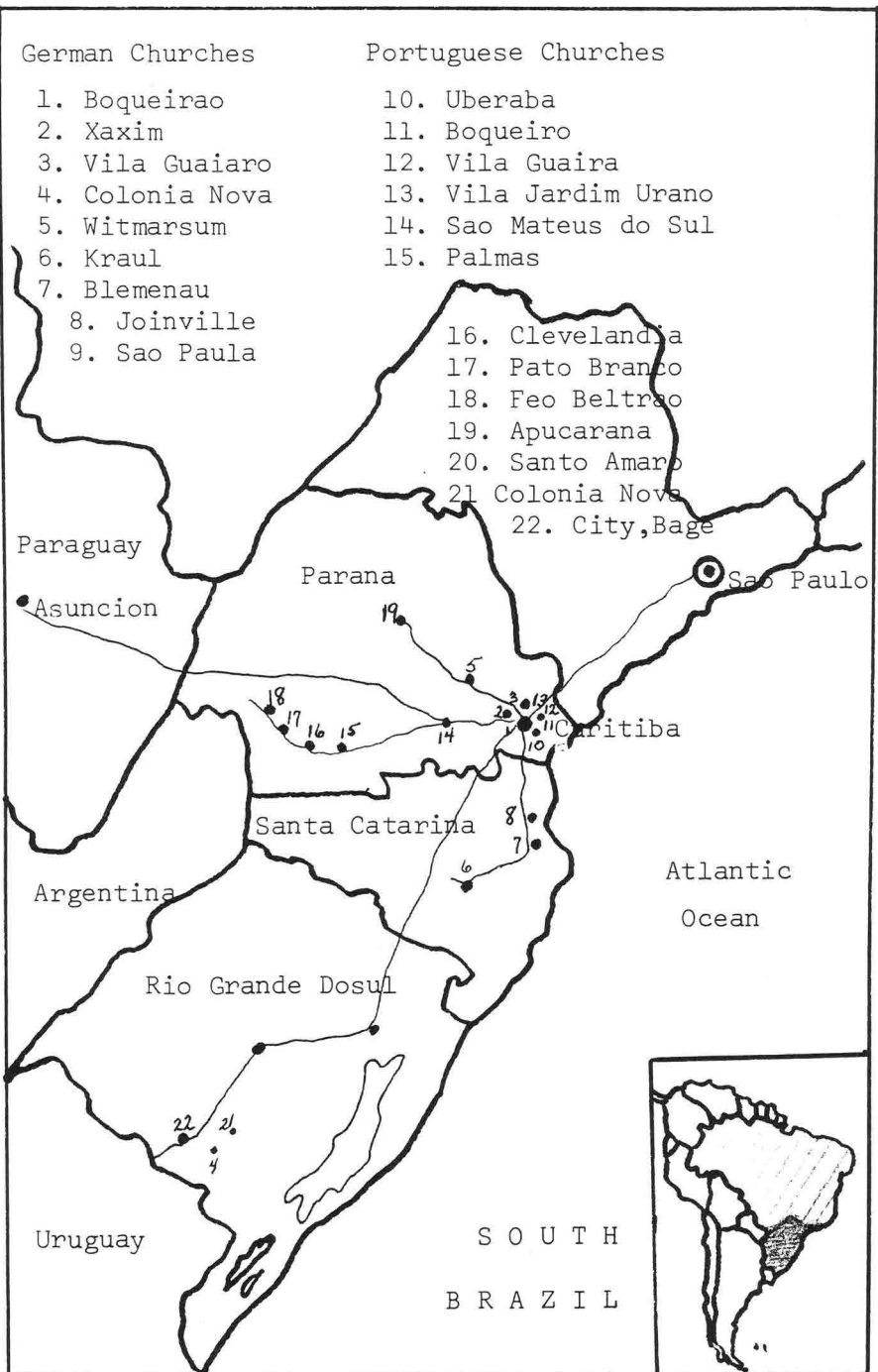
It is a mosaic of contrasts. It is rich; it is desperately poor. It is mountainous; it is flat. It is humid rain forest; it is dry chaco. It is democratic, it is communistic, it is militaristic. It is one continent; it is many countries--twenty including Central America, the island republics, and the nations of South America. It is a great mixing-pot of peoples, from the jet-haired Indians of the jungles, to the olive-skinned Spanish and the meztizo to the fair-haired Germans of southern Brazil.

On this continent the Mennonite Brethren are trying what might be called experiments in missions. The experiments have taken a variety of shapes: broadcasting in German, teaching crop rotation to jungle Indians, planting clusters of churches in a city, running an orphanage or a city center, or pioneering an extension seminary. Some experiments have prospered, others have been dropped. Debate is still going on as to the best method of evangelizing Latin America.

On the surface, Mennonite Brethren work falls into three main divisions: work by the German Mennonites living in Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay; work by North American missionaries; and, more recently, work by the national conferences. By this time, however, the lines of administration have become so interwoven and complex that it is simpler to discuss the work by countries. The work of the three conferences has taken this general pattern:

BRAZIL	Association of German-speaking churches Convention of Portuguese-speaking churches North American missions
COLOMBIA	Colombian churches Indian churches North American missions

ECUADOR	Radio work
PANAMA	Churches among Indians, Negroes, Spanish North American missions
PARAGUAY	German-speaking churches in colonies Indian and Paraguayan churches North American missions Mennonite Central Committee
PERU	North American missions
URUGUAY	North American Missions



BRAZIL: THE GIANT

"My country has palm trees," wrote the exiled poet as he dreamed of Brazil. "And also snakes," cynics sometimes add.¹

Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world. Larger than the 48 states of the U.S., it stretches 2860 miles both north to south and east to west. It has 4600 miles of coastline and 90 million people. It has beauty, rich soil, vast mineral resources, and abundant water. Brazil is the industrial leader of Latin America. Its coastal and southern states are booming. Within 450 miles along the coast, for example, lie three major cities: Rio de Janeiro, 4 million; Sao Paulo, perhaps 6 million; and Curitiba, 1 million. Porto Allegre to the south and Salvador and Recife to the north, all coastal cities, contain another 3 million people.

". . . but the country is troubled by poverty, illiteracy, and instability," wrote John Klassen. The vast backlands of the north-east are sparsely-settled poverty areas, where the people live in hovels on a near-starvation diet. Despite government drives, 30% of the people there are illiterate. The new capital Brasilia was built in the interior with the purpose of attracting more people inland and thus alleviating these problems.

Brazil has other "snakes" to contend with. Politically the country exists from crisis to crisis, though it has a constitution similar to that of the U.S. A civil war and communistic takeover were narrowly averted in 1964. Prime ministers resign periodically, and power shifts from faction to faction. At present a military rule combined with a form of democracy gives liberty to its people and is opposed to communism.

Inflation is a serious problem: up 900% in less than 5 years, up 16,800% since 1948. Churches must spend their money immediately, remarked Mr. Klassen, or see it vanish. Rapid industrialization has upset the social structure, so that the gap between rich and poor is more glaring than ever.

If McGavran is correct that in times of tumult and revolution a country is particularly receptive to the call of Christ,² then Brazil should be wide open to Christian missions.

Brazil is more than wide open. It is a modern missions phenomenon. William Read, studying church growth in Brazil, could not measure this growth in terms of old standards and so published a book called New Patterns of Church Growth in Brazil. The Brazilian Protestant church, now increasing faster than the population of the country, has been called one of the most significant modern mission movements. Dr. Clyde Taylor said in 1963, "The Protestant church in Latin America is growing faster than anywhere else in the world." And among the Latin America countries, Brazil is growing fastest—6% per year compared to 3% per year for all countries. Church membership rose from 175,500 in 1937 to 3 1/4 million in 1970. The Protestant (Evangelico) community has reached 15 million and is no longer considered a minority sect.

In this evangelical movement the Mennonite Brethren have a part, which, though small, is growing at a significant rate: the Brazilian conference, for instance, increased 25% during 1967-68 and 33% during 1968-69. The Mennonite Brethren churches are concentrated, like the population, along the coast, with headquarters in Curitiba.

The first Mennonite Brethren churches in Brazil were not the result of evangelization, however, but of colonization. Many refugees from Russia were living in barracks in Germany, waiting to go to Canada, Paraguay, or Brazil. Since the Hanseatic Colonization Corporation of Germany owned a tract of primitive forest in Santa Catarina, the government offered to sell this land to the refugees. About one thousand accepted the offer and left for Brazil in mid-winter, 1930. Others followed later to found the colonies Alto Rio Krauel and Stoltzplateau. Hans Kasdorf of Blumenau writes, "There they were in the midst of the sub-tropical hardwood forests with a tangled mass of thorny underbrush too thick to put down a stone for a pillow. . . ."3 Henry Esau, a Bible school teacher, takes up the story:

There they started to cut down the forest and prepare the land for farming. They were poor and didn't understand the Portuguese language, so no mission work could be done. They also were separated from the rest of the world on both sides by mountains and no roads. But after a few years they began to look for other land and possibilities of life. They found Curitiba, a nice place on the Brazilian highlands, and a group moved to that place and started dairying near Curitiba. More and more people left Alto Krauel and went to Curitiba. . . .

Another group that later on left Alto Krauel settled in Bage, near the Uruguyan border. They built a church and schools. But here they saw the opportunity for mission and so they worked in their neighborhood. . . .

Another group went to Witmarsum and started there an M.B. church. Others went to Sao Paulo and began an M.B. church.⁴

In time the Krauel colony disintegrated altogether, and the Mennonites concentrated in and around Curitiba.

If the struggle for existence was great, the struggle for spiritual vitality was greater. According to Hans Kasdorf bitterness and strife among the leaders so alienated the people of the colonies that to this day the Brazil church speaks of a "lost" or "missing generation." Pro-Nazi enthusiasm caused so much tension that the Brazilian government closed down schools and churches.

Then a stirring began in the colonies, revivals came under the ministries of brethren from North America-- B. B. Janz, Robert Seibel, Mennonite Central Committee worker John Kaufman. With revival came a new interest in missions. The church which had not grown in twenty years experienced a sudden spurt of growth. Between 1949 and 1964 membership increased from 418 to 1269-- an increase of 200%, compared to the general Protestant growth of 30% and U.S. church growth of 49%. The chief source of new members was not children of church families but conversions.

By this time the colonies were economically settled. "Socially and economically our Mennonite Brethren, especially the younger generation, fit quite well into the rapidly emerging middle class of Brazil," wrote Hans Kasdorf. The German-speaking Mennonites found it easy to relate to the many German settlers in southern Brazil.

The arrival of these settlers is an interesting story. When King Louis Philippe's son, the Prince of Joinville, married a Brazilian princess in 1843, part of her dowry was a tract of land 300 miles from Sao Paulo in Santa Catarina state. Soon after the marriage a group of German settlers arrived to tame the wilderness. They called their settlement Joinville, after their prince. Joinville is now an industrial city of 86,000, half of its population being of German descent.

The first outreach of the German churches, however, was not among the German-speaking people but among the Portuguese. "There is hardly a church of the German Mennonite Brethren Conference which does not have an extension work among the Brazilians,"⁵ reported J. J. Toews after a visit to Brazil. The three German churches in Curitiba, the Boqueirao, Xaxim, and Vila Guaira churches, each had an outpost nearby which grew into the now independent Portuguese churches of Boqueirao II, Vila Urano, and Vila Guaira. The Bage church started small congregations in all directions; two of these have become independent churches, three are congregations. The Sao Paulo church had an extension center.

When these congregations became independent and acquired national pastors, it seemed obvious that they should join, not with the parent German conference, but with other Portuguese churches. Thus it came about that the German churches eventually relinquished responsibility for these churches and handed over the evangelism of the Portuguese to their own people.

The German churches now cast their eyes instead toward the German-speaking settlers, with whom they shared a common language and culture. There was already one non-Mennonite German church: Blumenau. This group, begun by the Plymouth Brethren, had decided to affiliate with the Mennonite Brethren. Probably the most

important outreach of the Blumenau church is its German broadcasts, which prepare the people for home Bible studies and other gospel witness, and through which seven Sunday schools and preaching points have already sprung up.

The German Conference now began sending missionaries to Santa Catarina. Henry Esau of Brazil said, "In the last 10 years they more and more are concentrating their forces to reach the German people in Santa Catarina, where they have started a nice mission work, first in Blumenau, then in the county of Getulio Vargas in different places."⁶ The six missionaries now in Santa Catarina receive very little subsidy from North America. Most of them have begun a local church; some congregations have acquired property and a building.

To Joinville itself came the David Nightingales, under the North American board. The Nightingales had been in charge of the German department of Radio HCJB; but seeing the hearty response of the German people of southern Brazil, they left radio to work directly among the people of Joinville. As it turned out, the Nightingales began a new radio program in Joinville--"Sonntags-segen" or "Sunday Blessing," aired twice a week.

While all this was going on, up near Curitiba an orphanage had begun--the first experiment of the North America Mission Board in outreach to Brazil. The idea arose with Jacob Unruh of Shafter, California, who, having worked in a Salvation Army orphanage, recommended that the Mennonite Brethren Conference establish their own. Thus in 1947, seven miles from Curitiba, the new orphanage opened its doors to Portuguese-speaking children.

Nobody knew how much work this orphanage was going to be. Many children came badly disturbed by parental rejection, from broken homes, from no homes. They were in need of love and emotional security. "Spiritual results in these lives seemingly correlate with the satisfaction of these needs," said the 1966 General Conference Yearbook. The workers fed them, clothed them, taught them to read and farm, told them of God's love. Some, like Carmen Pombeiro, became Christians. Today Carmen is the wife of Walter Rempel, the leader

of the Boquerao II church. Others, like Rui, did not respond; Rui is a sidewalk vendor with no sign of Christian experience.

By 1964 it was apparent that results at the orphanage were not commensurate with the time, money and personnel involved. In 1966 clashes with the local judge brought about a decision to close the home and return the children to relatives or guardians as quickly as possible. The buildings are now rented by students at the Bible Institute (refer to p.149), and negotiations are under way to sell the property.

Thus ended one experiment in missions in Latin America. That the home had some long-lasting result is pointed out by Henry Esau: "Of the children in the Home some have married pastors, some are real witnesses among their own people. Lar das Crianças was the first to make an outreach into the interior and helped to establish the churches."⁷

The two schools begun by the Mission are still operating in connection with the Home: a primary school under the direction of a German-Brazilian principal; and a secondary school, named Ginasio Erasmo Braga after a prominent Brazilian Christian statesman, operated by the German conference with government subsidy.

A church was organized near the children's home--the first national Mennonite Brethren church in Brazil. Members were children and personnel from the Home, but there were visitors from the neighborhood--day laborers, Catholics, spiritists. This church, in a suburb of Curitiba called Uberaba, now has fifty active members. Sezinando, who was once a medium of spiritism, is now the assistant pastor and also a student at Parana Bible Institute.

This little fire soon began sending out sparks into other places. A lady converted there moved to the small town San Mateus, where missionaries went to visit her, and by 1960 a church had organized there. Other members of the Uberaba church had relatives in Palmas 250 miles away, and a small church developed there also. In 1953 some Mennonites had tried to start a colony in Clevelandia but had failed; however missionaries visited the place and a congregation formed there.

Clevelandia began outreach in the next town, Pato Branco. Miss Linda Banman, after she had done pioneer work in San Mateus and Clevelandia, went to Fransisco Beltrao, where she was able to start a small fellowship. Out of visits by the students and staff of the Parana Bible Institute (see p.149) grew the church Jardim das Americas.

In 1960 the Uberaba church sent a Brazilian to work among the Indians near Manguerinha. The work was discontinued, but in 1969 the Palmas church baptized two Indians, who are carrying on the testimony. Some in that area, not Indians, were saved.

Eventually the Portuguese churches--all small, all located in three of the four southern states of Brazil, begun either by German-speaking churches or through North American missions--began to meet for informal Bible and missionary conferences. By 1967 the "Convencao Brasileira das Igrejas Irmaos Menonitas" (Convention of Mennonite Brethren Churches in Brazil) was ready to register with the government. (Note: the German churches are registered as the Association of Mennonite Brethren Churches of Brazil. Thus "convention" refers to the Portuguese churches, "association" to the German churches.")

Statistics from the January 1970 Conference Book of Brazil register the following:

9 organized churches, 4 congregations, 15 home mission stations, a total of 37 delegates--16 national pastors, 6 missionaries, 15 delegates from churches.

Members in 1969, 552--a growth of 33% over 1968 Sunday School attendance, over 1000

Almost 50% of the total expense of churches raised by members.

The Convention now bears full responsibility for evangelism among the Portuguese-speaking people, though funds are still received from the Mission. In 1969 the Convention adopted these goals:

Double the number of organized churches in 5 years.

Double the membership in 3 years.

Each church to maintain one preaching point.

Many of the Convention leaders are Brazilian. A report of the Fifth Annual Convention, 1969, says,

There was a good sense of unity, but with healthy, free expression. The conference is maturing in mission-convention relations. Leadership is developing among the young men. These are now largely from the Russian background Mennonites, but a few also from the Brazilian. Only one missionary, James Wiebe, serves in the Directorate of the conference.⁸

Debate as to the best methods of church planting are still going on. Don Faul, pointing out that some Brazilian churches are growing at an unprecedented rate while the Mennonite Brethren church is growing slowly (though Ervin Thiesen points out that 33% last year is a significant growth rate, and that this is a solid growth), suggests a new method of church planting. The method in which a foreign mission board sends a worker, buys a lot and builds a church, and then invites the national to come, is not productive, he says--at least not in Brazil. Rather this worker should start a cluster of home Bible studies. When these groups grow strong enough, they can join to rent a hall or build. This church will become a "mother" church (a concept important to Brazilians) and start other clusters of Bible studies and, in time, other congregations. By this time the original missionary would long since have moved elsewhere. In this way national leadership would be given fullest encouragement, churches would be self-supporting from the beginning, and all leaders would be directly responsible to the congregations which support them (not, like a mission worker, to a foreign conference).⁹

Ervin Thiesen adds that the Brazilian churches should then send out their own missionaries, since nationals do a better job of choosing high potential areas than do foreign personnel.

The best approach, says Mr. Thiesen, is friendship approach. He tells of a pastor in Vila San Pedro who had no results for a long time; then suddenly people were coming to Christ every Sunday, every Wednesday. When asked what he was doing, the pastor said that his people were going out two by two, having coffee with Brazilians in their homes, leaving their Bibles at home, and simply talking. When they became friends and the people started asking about religious matters, then, and not before, it was time to invite them to church.

Mr. Thiesen goes on to define this approach as an approach to families. Brazilians are highly family-oriented people, and attempts to pull persons out of the family setting are ineffective. Finally, he says, the whole thing is to be done by Brazilians, by countrymen to their countrymen. Missionaries should stay behind the scene as strategists and counsellors.

Mr. Thiesen questions the long-lasting effect of emotional approaches, such as the mass appeals of campaigns or the more emotional appeal of some churches. Whether the 600 who responded in Curitiba to the Janz Team, or the hundreds of others who responded during Graham or Oswald Smith meetings, or the thousands who have joined the Pentecostal movements represent a sturdy, solid addition to the church would, of course, have to be determined over the years.

Other Ventures

When Ervin Thiesen recommended a Bible school as a necessary means to train nationals, the Board sent out John Klassens to begin Parana Bible Institute. In 1961 classes began with eight students.

At the same time the German churches had their Bible schools. At first these were itinerant--four months in Paraguay, four months in Brazil. Then a permanent location was chosen in Curitiba. Thus it came about that two Bible Institutes were built in Curitiba about 8 miles apart, one offering instruction in Portuguese and one in German, both receiving aid from North America. When it became apparent that no German

students were coming from outside of Brazil (a Spanish Bible Institute having begun in Asuncion), plans were made to merge the two Curitiba schools. The merger is planned for 1971; courses are to be offered in both German and Portuguese.

Extension Bible training came to Brazil a few years ago. John Klassen, of the Parana Bible Institute, describes this new method of teaching.

At present we operate two extension centres in Curitiba, in the Boqueirao and Vila Guaira churches. Students come once a week to the local church to meet with a teacher, and once per month on a Sunday afternoon to the Bible institute for an extra lecture, sports, and (of course) examinations.

Since last year Floyd Born has made monthly trips to the various towns in southwestern Parana to teach groups in the various churches. Last year he had about 40 students. During the intervening weeks the students met with their local pastor.

From Bage, near the Uruguayan border, one of our former students wrote for help with a similar program. Because Bage is seven hundred miles away and takes over a day to travel by bus, we had to modify our program. Two teachers went there for a weekend in February to get them started. They will meet weekly with their pastor . . . Floyd Born will mail them monthly exams, to keep them on par with other groups. In July, our winter vacation month, a teacher expects to go for final exams and to help the group get started on the second semester. Then in December, after school is out in Curitiba, another trip for final exams.¹⁰

This teaching method, he says, is made possible by the programmed text-books which the Baptists, Assemblies, and Mennonite Brethren have prepared. Dietrich Reimer, for instance, a Brazilian of German-speaking background, prepared two texts in Old Testament:

Vol. I, Genesis-Esther, Vol. II, Job-Malachi. He is working also on a church administration manual.

That the "traveling school" is more popular, more suited to the lives of the Latin American, is evident from enrollment statistics: 21 on campus, 54 in the ten extension centers.

City work is coming more and more into focus. Sao Paulo is joining Curitiba and Joinville as a center of endeavor. This metropolis of eight million is expected to reach a population of 26 million by 1980. "I believe there is tremendous potential in the cities, especially Sao Paulo," wrote missionary James Wiebe, "We know that the newly arrived persons (from distant rural areas primarily) are reachable." He summarizes the Sao Paulo work:

1. The Santo Amaro church is planning to sell (they are working out legal entanglements as of this moment) the lot purchased for about U.S. \$3000 five years ago, for \$10,000. They anticipate buying property farther out where land is cheaper and construct a permanent building with the proceeds from this sale. (Note: they presently meet in what someone called a "dilapidated machine shed.") This will be in Camp Belo, about 15 minutes away by car.

2. German Church Extension work. Within the last two or three months they have officially assumed the responsibility for a Sunday School and gospel work carried on in Portuguese for years by a member. Everyone is very optimistic about the prospects.¹¹

Board of Missions/Services also works in some six interior cities, though it concerns itself only with existing property, which is being sold as quickly as possible, and the groups of believers themselves are integrated into the Convention of Portuguese-speaking churches.

A different type of city work is the city center in Curitiba, located near a large university. "As

people rise economically," wrote John Klassen, "it becomes increasingly difficult to reach them. They do not have time or interest in changing religion." To attract these middle-class or upper-class people, the Bill Wagners have been running a center which offers sports nights, youth meetings, and Sunday services. "Our witness has continued to broaden out--university students, neighbors, professional people," wrote Mr. Wagner. They are assisted by Mr. Darcy Fehrmann, a Portuguese-speaking young man from Blumenau. What shape this experiment will take in the future has yet to be seen.

Publications is still another venture. Eight mission groups, including the Mennonite Brethren, are putting out a full-scale effort to provide Sunday school material in Portuguese--60 quarterlies for children plus teachers' books and adults materials. Translation of the material (mostly Gospel Light) is done by Brazilians, printing by the Bethany Press in Brazil.

The Convention prints a bimonthly paper Novas de Alegria (Good News), and has set up a Literature Committee to promote the sale of good materials in the churches.

Radio programs in Curitiba, Clevelandia and Francisco-Beltrao are being produced by the local churches for a potential audience of about 1 1/2 million. "Good News" is on the air three times a week. It is financed partly by the local churches, partly by the Convention.

Thus the experiments in reaching Brazil's vast population with the gospel of Christ have taken several forms: Orphanage, planting of small congregations in villages, a cluster of churches in Curitiba and another in Sao Paulo, a Bible Institute with traveling extension, a city center. Some ventures have been dropped. Which of the others should receive priority as having the highest potential is a question not fully resolved. Perhaps in the end the Brazilians themselves will

decide in what way they can best bring Christ to their countrymen.

The Brazilian church faces its own peculiar challenges. If freedom is favorable to the evangelicals, it is also favorable to the rapidly growing sects and cults. While it is true that a people disenchanted with the Catholic church are turning to the evangelicals, they are turning even more to such religions as spiritism. It was reported that a clerk registering one of the new Mennonite Brethren churches one day in 1964 remarked that on that same day he had also registered seven spiritist centers.

The German conference, says Hans Kasdorf of Blumenau, will need to change its legalistic attitude toward converts, many of whom come from a society where separation and common-law living are prevalent. "Some of these may be genuinely born again and sincerely desiring baptism and church membership," he wrote, "yet our Brazilian church refuses to 'deal redemptively' with these people because of the (church) constitution."¹²

The national convention still depends heavily on North American subsidy. Therefore growth is limited to a large extent by the funds arriving from abroad. "The national church needs to form a new mentality of trusting in God to provide means through national channels," wrote John Klassen, adding, "In part, of course, this is happening, only I would like to see it hap-en more rapidly." Missionary Erwin Thiessen adds, "As younger churches they need our encouragement and understanding. They will make mistakes, but we should put our complete confidence in their judgments."

FOOTNOTES

¹John Klassen, Christian Leader, February 18, 1964, p. 8.

²Donald McGavran (ed.), Church Growth and Christian Mission (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

³Hans Kasdorf, "Mennonite Brethren Church Growth in Brazil," (unpublished, mimeographed manuscript, 1969), p. 5.

⁴Henry Esau, Personal Interview, Fall, 1970.

⁵J. J. Toews, Letter, September 1970.

⁶Esau, op. cit.

⁷Esau, op. cit.

⁸Annual Report of the Convention of Mennonite Brethren Churches in Brazil, 1969.

⁹Don Faul, "Projected Plan for the Brazilian Mennonite Brethren Church" (unpublished Master's thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas, 1967).

¹⁰John Klassen, Personal Interview and notes, 1970.

¹¹James Wiebe, Personal letter, 1970.

¹²Kasdorf, op. cit., p. 21.

See also William Read, New Patterns of Church Growth in Brazil (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965).



Chapter 9

PARAGUAY: THE WILDERNESS THAT
BLOSSOMED

Paraguay is a land of plains and dry bush in the West and of rain forest and hills in the East. Here, in the central Chaco of the West, German Mennonite colonists are struggling to wrest a living from the sandy ground, side by side with nomadic Indians who had for centuries roamed through the bush in search of game. The Mennonites have indeed become prominent enough to find their way into secular Paraguayan history:

. . . various groups of immigrants have made their way to Paraguay and have established successful and progressive settlements. Notable among them are the Mennonites, who came to the Chaco from Canada and elsewhere.¹

When the German settlers first arrived, the Indians were wanderers in the bush, hunters. The newcomers found neither house, nor shop, nor road, only the prevailing bush and the hard ground of the Chaco. To the east beyond the Paraguay River were forests; to the south was Asuncion, a city of 300,000. But here on the plains the bushland stretched wild and inhospitable under the sky.

Paraguay had invited the settlers. The country, though the size of California, had only 2 1/4 million inhabitants; it was still trying to recover from the prostrating wars with neighbor countries in 1865-1870. It had need of hard-working farmers who could tame the interior wilderness. Therefore it invited the German refugees, "the old and the young, the sick and the strong, without any selective medical examination." The invitation was a godsend to the refugees fleeing from the persecution in Russia and barred from practically every other country. It was also a place of refuge for those seeking religious freedom or isolation.

The hundreds of Canadian Mennonites who came to Paraguay in the 1920's were concerned to preserve their spiritual heritage. They had already purchased lands;

but when they arrived, they found to their dismay that their lands had not yet been surveyed. In the sixteen months it took to establish title, 147 persons died in a typhoid epidemic. Some grew discouraged and returned to Canada. Those who remained began Menno Colony in what was called the "Green Hell" of the Chaco. Because these were the first pioneers, they had the difficult task not only of clearing ground but of discovering first-hand what crops would grow on the Chaco soil.

Great waves of refugees came in during the 1930's from war-stricken Russia and Poland, via Germany. They brought little with them but their lives, saved in harrowing escapes from the terrors left behind, and their griefs over family members left behind--dead, ill, lost behind the Iron Curtain. With the help of Mennonite Central Committee and Menno Colony they were able to start Ferhneim, though they too lost 65 persons to the typhoid epidemic. Some went to Friesland in Eastern Paraguay. Here the villages and farms had to be carved out of heavy jungle forest. A third wave of immigrants established Neuland (West) and Volendam (East): these were refugees from Berlin and West German camps, over 4000 in all. Though they received help from existing colonies, many eventually went to Canada or returned to Germany. Bergthal and Sommerfeld (East) were established by Canadians from the prairie provinces.

The settlers faced the formidable task of clearing the ground and building a self-sustaining economy. In Neuland, the back-breaking work of clearing off the brush and breaking up the ground was often done by "widows" whose husbands, fate unknown, were somewhere in Russia or Siberia. In the Chaco, the villages were built on sandy campland, open spaces which appear like islands in the surrounding bush. In the East the villages and farms had to be carved out of the heavy jungle forest. Of this hard time Mrs. Frieda Kaethler wrote:

How well some of us still remember the diet of dry beans (sometimes full of bugs), rice, tallow for frying, no milk, no meat, no eggs. Vividly we remember how water was dipped from the village well at night by the bucketful, and at times even by the cupful, and this in great heat. Many of us still

remember the typhoid epidemic where 66 people died in three villages and it was hard to find neighbors well enough to make coffins by hollowing out a soft pulp tree or to dig a grave.²

Spiritual confusions and tensions carried over from the war, difficulty and discouragement notwithstanding, the settlers persisted in rebuilding their homes and their lives, with help from North America. Dr. J. W. Fretz, visiting the colonies in 1951, wrote, "The first impression one gets is of the tremendous courage with fortitude and even bravery that our brethren exhibited in carving homes out of the wilderness."³

By 1970 immense progress was visible. Economically the colonies in Paraguay have become nearly self-sufficient. They operate three cheese factories, two cotton gins, plants to produce peanut oil and oil from the palo santo tree. From the hard wood of the red quebracho ("break-axe") tree they learned to make tanin and red dye. Furniture making, leather tanning, shoe-making and the like are done by individual enterprise. "The Mennonite settler in Paraguay is like a school for our people," said Dr. Juan Plate, ambassador to the U.S. from Paraguay. He added that the Mennonites raised the best quality of cotton in the country.

The colonies have a complete school system built on the European plan: 6 years elementary, 4 years secondary, 2 years teacher-training. However they are changing in favor of the Paraguayan system. Filadelfia has a co-operative Bible School. Each colony has a nurses' training school and a hospital. A Paraguayan in government circles once told the brethren in Asuncion,

You should not only think of Bible schools, but also of elementary schools and teacher-training schools in which you can prepare teachers. You Mennonites have a good reputation with the government as educators and teachers. You must meet this challenge.⁴

"This challenge" is one which the colonies are meeting successfully.

At first the Mennonites of all denominations--General Conference, Old Mennonite, Krimmer Mennonite Brethren, and Mennonite Brethren--all met together for services. After a time they drew apart and met in separate buildings for some services, so as to preserve denominational distinctives. The Mennonite Brethren now have three churches in Fernheim, one in Neuland, and one in Asuncion, with a total membership of perhaps 1000.

The spiritual struggles of the colonists were the first concern of both church and school. Leaders like G. B. Giesbrecht, Hans Wiens, Elder Jacob Isaak, and teacher-pastor Hans Niessen, as well as visiting brethren from the United States and Canada (some of whom served the colonies for terms of up to 15 years) worked hard to uplift drooping spirits and encourage the faint, and to teach the way of faith.

All around them in the bush, meanwhile, lived the Indians. To Mennonite eyes they appeared "cut off from the main stream of progress. They live and die uneducated, uncivilized, sick, fearful, unwanted." Evangelism among them was inevitable. The brethren organized a mission called "Licht den Indianern" or "Light to the Indians," and asked government permission to work with the Indians.

Light to the Indians

When Gerhard Giesbrecht of Fernheim began his work in 1935, he immediately faced the problem of learning the unwritten Lengua language. For eleven years he preached before the first convert was won. Then for a few years a small group of believers met under a tree. Finally, needing a building, they cut down trees, fetched bulrushes, and with nails and twine from the missionary they proceeded to build their church. Meanwhile Dietrich Lepp put the language into writing and translated the New Testament.

The men of the German colonies felt that they should encourage the Indians to settle into more permanent villages so that more food could be grown, and so that schools and churches could be built and the gospel message concentrated instead of being scattered by ceaseless wanderings. Missionary Jake Loewen describes the

nomadic life of the Indians:

(They build) temporary shelters in which they chop off branches from trees, stick the thick end into the ground and interweave the thin end, then cut some bittergrass from the plains which they put on top of the branches to shed water if it should be rainy season or even to keep out wind during the winter time. The wandering of the group always is in pursuit of animals, so that when they have hunted for a day or two in a given region, they will move in the direction where they suspect game or where there would be water because water is quite a problem in the area.⁵

They bought a tract of land and built there a missionary house, school, hospital, and farm, and persuaded the Lenguas to begin settling down. Seeing that the Mennonites were giving them land, the Indians became excited and began arriving in greater numbers.

Meanwhile the Chulupi Indians were coming to Filadelfia to camp on a vacant plot of land to pick cotton or clear brush for pay. A Spanish-speaking Chulupi one day told Mr. J. H. Franz about his depression because while there were many missions among other Indians, nobody cared about the Chulupis. Apparently there was some reason for the man's depression:

The problem in the sugar-cane fields with prostitution and hard liquor had made (the Chulupis) decide they wanted to change. Furthermore, the revival movement among the Toba and the Mataco had made them aware of Christianity, and knowing that the Mennonites were Christians, they went there with the express purpose of becoming like the Mennonites. They were then deeply disappointed when the Mennonites did not receive them. . . .⁶

Franz replied that he himself would be their missionary. There are now a good many Indian settlements:

Lenguas: Campo Largo, Laguna Pora, Yalve Sanga

Chulupis: La Esperanza, Nueva Vida, Pozo Amarillo,
Yalve Sanga, Camp Alegro, Cajin o Clim,
Filadelfia

Toba: Laguna Pora

Sanapana: La Esperanza

Guarani: Filadelfia

Each village is a long street with houses on each side, and behind the houses a series of ten-acre plots for farming. Each village has a school-church structure and a well. Each family grows sweet potatoes, watermelons, manioc, cotton, and other staples; some of the crop they trade at the Mennonite store, most they use immediately. During droughts they may go into the bush to hunt, perhaps for months. Many work for Mennonite farmers to earn a little money. Families may camp at the edge of a farm five days a week and go to their village on weekends.

The children are taught in village schools six months a year, taking two years per grade for the first three grades. Those who go on to the Spanish school in Yalve Sanga can come back and teach these primary schools. There are now fifty or sixty such Indian teachers.

Clinics are maintained at each center by the colonies. The Indians had some difficulty with hospital routine: one elderly gentleman disappeared from the hospital completely, and was found half a mile away, fast asleep beside an Indian fire.

The church? Missionary Giesbrecht's first converts meeting under the shade tree have multiplied until the Indian churches now have a membership of several thousand. In April 1958, the same month that the Auca Indian girl Dayuma was baptized in Wheaton, Illinois, the first Chulupi baptism was announced in the Christian Leader. Another baptism exactly eleven years later brought the number of baptized Chulupis up to 700. The Lenguas had some 500 members.

Meetings are sometimes informal, sometimes stiffly formal in an attempt to copy Mennonite service patterns. An Indian gives his testimony with much gesture, appealing to the congregation whether the things he says

are so. The people sing, or shout from the bottom of their hearts, Spanish and Indian songs and some Low German songs as well, such as "Immer Froehlich." (Most of the Indians learned the Low German from the colonists and speak it quite freely.) They have their own preachers, examine their own baptism candidates, have their own choirs which try to sing four-part harmony. A Mennonite colony woman remarked of their enthusiasm, "The Indians are praying more for the Mennonites than the Mennonites do for the Indians."

The Lengua New Testament was finished in 1969. The Chulupi New Testament is finished and has gone to press. Gerhard Ratzlaff of Fernheim points out that the Lengua and Chulupi languages are very different, even more different than English and German. Likewise, he says, the temperament of the two tribes is different: the Lengua is peaceful and slow in his ways, whereas the Chulupi is easily angered but is such a hard worker that farmers prefer to hire Chulupis.

Not long ago a number of Guaraní Indians moved into Fernheim, unable to find work where they were living. The Guaraní are an old, once highly civilized tribe inhabiting Paraguay, whose language is still today the common vernacular of three-fourths of the people. This particular group came from a Catholic area, and having settled in Fernheim remained Catholic in sympathy. Most attend mass in a small building, led by a priest, while a few go to services in a church erected by the Chulupis who formerly lived in Fernheim before moving to Yalve Sanga.

On the surface, then, the Indian work is fairly successful. The Indians have given up perhaps 90% of their animistic practices, including festivals celebrating puberty, or arousing the men to war, or preparing a new shaman or witch doctor for his duties. To what extent the people have in their hearts exchanged the new beliefs for former ones is another question. One missionary, becoming suspicious when band after band of Indians suddenly came to "change their innermosts," inquired; and found that what they wanted was a spirit strong enough to overcome their medicine man's spirit, of which they were much afraid. When an epidemic of whooping

cough caused the death of twenty children at Yalve Sanga, the Lengua leaders felt that perhaps the cause of the disease was the evil quilyicjama which neither medicine nor prayer had been able to overcome.

Missionary Jake Loewen suggests that the church must provide "functional substitutes" to fill the void left by abandoning the old festival cycle which drew the tribe together and filled many personal needs of the Indians. He suggests that sharing meetings, greater recognition of the role of leaders, a group celebration of special times in the Indians' personal lives would help the Lenguas to reestablish their social structure and to redefine themselves.⁷

Relationships with the Mennonite colonies and culture is another problem. For a band of Indians to sing in four-part harmony the old Russian hymn "Wie Sues Toent Sabbat's Glockenkland" ("How Sweetly Rings the Sabbath Bell") seems an anomaly. The Indians have left many of their traditional ways to accommodate themselves to the ways and language of the missionaries but still cannot be assimilated into the German colonies. The two groups have difficulty understanding one another's culture and attitudes: the German grows impatient with the Indian's apparently lazy, unthrifty ways, while the Lengua confides that he has a hard time living with the German's impatient, "wavy" innermost and his refusal to share food in the communal manner of the Indian. The tribes face problems new to them. For example, having abandoned the old practice of infanticide, they now face a population explosion, over-crowding and malnutrition. Formerly the weak and sick died; now they are kept alive by medicines and the tribe must carry them along.

These problems are being studied by the Board for Indian Settlement, sponsored by the Mennonite Central Committee with some help from Board of Missions/Services and from Mennonite Economic Development Association. Mennonite Economic Development Association, for example, owns property to the south of the colonies, and it may be possible to rent land to the Indians for expansion purposes. (The Indians now equal the Mennonites in number, perhaps 10,000.) At present all Mennonite groups in the colonies work together in colonization and medical

work for the Indians, while the Mennonite Brethren have been put in charge of spiritual work. Several missionaries who speak the Indian languages visit the centers to encourage and teach as they are needed.

The Indians themselves are trying to come to grips with their problems. Mr. J. H. Franz reported that in May, 1970, a conference of about 60 Chulupí preachers, teachers and church workers discussed such matters as church building, family, church and social leadership, the second generation, the problem of sickness, death and witchcraft in relation to their spiritual and social life.

The encounter between Mennonites and Morros, though brief, was dramatic enough to make headlines in the Christian Leader.

Feb. 12, 1955: "Morro Indians Wound Two" The Morros attacked two Mennonite villages in Fernheim, wounding two men with spear and arrow. The colonists responded by making two trips into Morro territory with gifts of food, clothes and trinkets, which they put out on the trails. They asked themselves, "Are the Indians simply blind and brutal and fierce, or have these attacks been provoked? . . . the settlement of the white man in the Chaco may be regarded as an infringement on their property rights."

But the Morros had vanished. Three years later more headlines appeared:

Sept. 9, 1958: "Contact reported with the Morros" Oilmen working in Morro territory reported a brief contact.

Sept. 23, 1958: "Missionary Meets Death Trying to Reach Morros" This was the story of Kornelius Isaak, who died of a spear-thrust. Giesbrecht wrote afterwards, "We are trying to do all we can. . . . It seems as though the hardest crust has been broken." (Oct. 7, 1958)

Oct. 2, 1962: "A Friendly Contact With the Morros" Four Mennonites going in by jeep were met by a band of Morros in a friendly, happy encounter.

March 5, 1963: "Morros Come to Filadelfia."
Several Morros appeared and moved about the farms freely, saying they would stay "many days."

Oct. 8, 1969: "Ten Years Later"--"Several hundred Morros have laid down their spears. . . ."

The Morro work has now been given to the New Tribes Mission. There reportedly is a band of about thirty Christians among the Morros.

Light to the Paraguayans

Among the Paraguayan or Spanish-speaking people the Friesland colony has begun a small outreach--to the south, two small congregations, and in San Estanislao a missionary and a small church.

Asuncion, however, already has a cluster of small churches. Albert Enns, an immigrant from Russia in 1948, went to Asuncion in 1955 and began what was at first a slow, discouraging work. For two years he and others distributed literature and visited homes. He had to carry his literature door to door himself as mail carriers refused to deliver any evangelical materials. When he was ready to begin regular services, 2000 invitations were given out--but not one of the people thus invited showed up at the first meeting. "Early services," said a report, "took place in a rented garage-type house which, as was discovered later, was also the operational base of harlots."

Now, not only this church but, four others are established: Hospital de Clinica church (so named because it is near a hospital) in 1961, Bernardino Caballero in 1964, then Vista Alegre, Santa Lucia, and San Isidro. Combined membership is about 170. Three of the pastors are Paraguayans. Albert Enns reports a feeling of unity and love among the Christians; the people are poor, he says, but are giving more than a tenth to God. One man had very bad shoes but was very happy nevertheless, because his "shoe-money" had been given to God.

With help from Board of Missions/Services it became possible to start both an elementary school and a Spanish Bible Institute in Asuncion. The staff for both schools comes from the Paraguayan Mennonites. Of the

Bible Institute Mr. Enns wrote in a letter, "The Bible Institute is of great significance since in it the present and future workers are being trained."

Mr. Enns was recently invited to begin some jail work. As he describes the circumstances in a letter, a doctor neighbor of his asked him to help at the jail, though it was under Catholic control. The doctor was in charge of the medical and psychological care of the inmates and saw such need for spiritual help that he got permission to invite an evangelical to come in. The inmates were some eighty boys under twenty years old, most of them from well-to-do homes, the product of a fragmented society. For the first time in the history of the jail a Christmas Eve service was conducted. Later a Catholic leader said, "If this one could only convert some of these boys and then us also!"⁸

The Paraguayan wilderness has blossomed: where once was empty bush and forest, there are now villages and farms, factories and roads. Where once the Indians hunted for game, the people of the tribes now gather to speak to one another of the grace of God.

FOOTNOTES

¹Roberto Mujica-Lainez, "Paraguay," Lands and People, Vol. VII (New York: Grolier Society), p. 243.

²Frieda Kaethler, Christian Leader, December 30, 1969, p. 24.

³J. W. Fretz, Christian Leader, December 15, 1951, p. 14.

⁴Christian Leader, November 10, 1964, p. 8.

⁵Jacob A. Loewen, Personal letter to Phyllis Martens, June, 1971.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Jacob A. Loewen, "Lengua Festivals and Functional Substitutes," Practical Anthropology, Vol. XIV, No. 1 (Jan.-Feb., 1967).

⁸Albert Enns, Letter [n.d.].

See also Peter J. Kroeker, "Lenguas and Mennonites: A Study of Cultural Change in the Paraguayan Chaco, 1928-1960 (unpublished Master's thesis, Wichita State University, 1970).

See also Jacob A. Loewen, "The Choco and the Spirit World," Practical Anthropology, Vol. XI, No. 3 (May-June, 1964).



URUGUAY: THE BIG CITY

"We are in a religious vacuum," said a Uruguayan. This country with its modern social welfare program, the highest literacy rate in the continent, separation of church and state, and high living standards, is perhaps the most progressive country in Latin America. It is a land of plenty: it has fruit, cattle, grain, vegetables, lovely beach resorts which attract tourists. And yet public and private morality is declining. The people are largely unchurched, the Protestant community being particularly small.

The Mennonite Brethren first came into Uruguay as colonists, part of the great wave of refugees that settled in Paraguay and Brazil. The colonists settled in Sarandi, Gartental, and Colonia. The two Mennonite Brethren churches in the colonies are small, having a combined attendance of about 100.

An increasing number of colony young people came to the city of Montevideo to find employment, then settled down there. There was no Mennonite Brethren church; and so some of the young people became active in other denominations, others found in the anonymity of city life an excuse to leave the church altogether. To give spiritual and social guidance, the Mennonite Central Committee set up a hostel in Montevideo where the young people could live and enjoy social activities and Sunday services.

Mission work proper is only a few years old. The first missionary to be sent by the board was Dan Wirsche in 1968. Mr. Wirsche's first work in Montevideo took the form of house visitation, Bible studies in homes, and evangelistic meetings. The first two methods were most successful, he said, especially when the homes were visited in a time of trouble.

A young couple lost their only child. This couple was contacted on the day of the funeral. We continued to visit them, had Bible studies with them. Both accepted Christ and are faithful to the Lord. What has caught our attention is that practically all those saved were facing a specific problem in

their life and didn't know where to go nor what to do. When Christ was presented they accepted Him and found peace.¹

Montevideo now has one Mennonite Brethren Church and several preaching points. (There is no rural work.) The more than one million people of this beautiful city are largely of Latin background, with a sprinkling of Germans, Poles, and Hungarians. It is easier to reach the older people than the youth, reported Mr. Wirsche. One problem the young people face is the opposition of parents who favor other faiths. Still, about 30 children have attended Bible classes and summer camps.

The Montevideo church has a national pastor, Walter Preza, supported in part by the mission board and in part by the Uruguayan Mennonite Brethren Conference--a joint conference of the two German colony churches and the Spanish-speaking Montevideo church. The city church is also able to carry all its own expenses as well as an evangelistic program.

The future? Pastor Walter Preza sees schools as the key to strong evangelism:

The Protestant churches have not flourished in Uruguay in spite of the religious liberty we enjoy. I want to believe the main reason was that we had no Bible Institutes nor seminaries in Uruguay. Those who wanted to prepare themselves had to go somewhere else. An independent missionary came to Uruguay, he started church work but soon started his own Bible school and trained layworkers as well as pastors. His work flourished and is national in character.²

According to this evaluation, the future should include a school as well as the church planting now in progress. While Uruguay has a number of seminaries and Bible schools, none of them are sponsored by the Mennonite Brethren.

Missionary Wirsche sees a tremendous potential in the Uruguay work, now that it is being carried on among the Uruguayan nationals instead of the German colonists, where some brethren have ministered. In fact the German

churches themselves have awakened to an interest in missions, he says, and are now not only supporting the work among the Uruguayans financially but are attempting to bring the gospel to their Uruguayan neighbors.³ It is expected that by 1972 both Wirsches and Herman Bullers will be back at work in Montevideo.

FOOTNOTES

¹Dan Wirsche, Personal letter, March, 1970.

²Ibid.

³Dan Wirsche, Interview, July, 1971.



COLOMBIA: LAND OF LEARNING

Colombia has always been a nation of letters. Bogota has sometimes been called "The Athens of Latin America."¹

Bogota, intellectual center and capital city, has many universities both public and private, one dating back to 1572. More universities are located in the aristocratic towns of Popayan, in Medellin, Cartagena and Cali. Some of Latin America's finest writers have come from Colombia: linguist Rufino Cuervo; novelists Jose Rivera and Carrasquilla; poets Jose Silva and Jorge Isaaca.

In a country where secular learning is prized, a major experiment in Christian education is now being carried on: theological training by extension. This is a seminary program which brings the school to the student, rather than the student to a central school. Enrollment, including some Mennonite Brethren young people, has reached nearly one thousand. So innovative and effective is the project that Dr. Ted Ward, head of the Department of Applied Education and Psychology at Michigan State University, called it the outstanding educational development in 24 countries he had visited, adding, "For once it seems that the Lord's work is leading a major field of human endeavor." This project will be described more fully later in the chapter.

Mennonite Brethren missions in Colombia did not begin with a seminary, however. For Colombia is not only a country of cities with universities, but a country where many people are poor and under-educated, where several families crowd into a single small dwelling, where fathers often desert their families and mothers must work or beg to feed the children, where life is poor and hard, save for the occasional fiesta. Though a middle class with better living standards is emerging, life for the common man continues to be difficult.

Because Colombia is a land of mountains and valleys, only 2% of the land is under cultivation; the rest of the land is either forest or too mountainous for use, other than raising cattle. The economy depends heavily

on coffee exports. The coffee plantations lie on the steep mountain sides up to perhaps 5000 feet; at higher altitudes the people raise potatoes and grain crops.

The people themselves are chiefly a mixture of Spanish and Indian called mestizo. A good many whites of European descent and some Negroes bring about further mixture in population. Most of the 22 million people live in higher mountain areas; 50% are in cities. The western jungles are inhabited by the Negroes and some Indians, while on the eastern plains dwell Indians and, more recently, white Colombian farmers and cattlemen. Of Colombia's 50 to 60 Indian tribes, not all have been evangelized, though Wycliffe has touched many tribes in the last five years.

When by Mission Board commission the Dan Wirsches went to Colombia in 1945 to set up a station, they were informed of an unoccupied mission building for sale in La Cumbre, Valle. Since this was a healthful mountain area, the Wirsches decided to make it their headquarters, a place from which work could be extended to the hot and humid coastal lowlands (rainfall is 400-500 inches a year) in which the Board was at first primarily interested. The Wirsches were soon joined by Lillian Schafer, Annie Dyck and the John Dycks. The whole group settled down to language study, first in Palmira and later in Medellin.

The remnant of a church which had once existed in La Cumbre now began to build up. Much later, during the persecutions, this church was to receive as members people who had been driven by violence in other regions to the mountains around La Cumbre. A primary school was started which was to continue for the next twenty years or so, reaching an enrollment of one hundred.

The Indian Work: A Failure?

In April of 1946 Dan and David Wirsche traveled into the steaming river country of the Choco looking for a possible location for a station. A house was rented in Istmina the next year, and the John Dycks with several missionary women moved there to evangelize. The Jake Loewens and David Wirsches moved to Noanama, a point

from which they could reach the Indians who were their particular concern. At both these places churches and dispensaries were built. Medical assistance was a good means of making friends and helping the people afflicted with all kinds of jungle ailments. While construction was going on, the gospel was being preached in Spanish. Because the state educational system was in a lamentable state in this region, missionaries opened primary schools; but these were short-lived in the face of opposition from local authorities.

To go upriver, the Chocoana and the Indian used the canoe and the champa, a narrow boat thirty feet long. But the missionaries found it practical to arrange for the use of outboard motors and launches because a gold mine, "The Choco Pacifica," had brought these in, as well as plane service to Quibdo and Andagoya. The mission purchased its own launch in 1950, and extensive evangelism began along the San Juan River. The preaching centers then begun in Bebedo, Condoto, Andagoya, and Basuru have since been organized into churches and have continued even after Noanama was discontinued.

The missionaries worked at the Waunana language, as yet unwritten, produced a grammar, dictionary, and translations of Bible stories. By Christmas of 1952 Jake Loewen was able to give the Noanama Indians the Christmas story in their own language.

A curious incident occurred which apparently prepared the Indians for this Christmas story. A young Waunana woman told her people that as she went to cut bananas, she was met by a small white dog (which has symbolic meaning for the Indians), followed by an apparition of her father and another relative, both dead for several years. The father said, "Child, our people have become very sinful and God is going to punish them with another great flood . . . none shall be saved." He urged that the people pray for one month. Hearing this story, Indians who previously had shown no repentance now sought God; and the Christmas story made a deep impression on the tribe. Jake Loewen and David Wirsche, visiting the Waunana at this time, reported that all 400 Indians on the Sirguirusua River had decided "to give God the hand and to walk on God's road."

Before missionaries could visit the tribe again, the Choco work was forbidden. A concordat between state church and government shut down the mission completely, so that when Mr. Loewen visited Noanama in 1956, all buildings--residences, church, school, dispensary--stood empty, with a government cloture seal across the doors. It appeared that four years of building should have been instead four years of learning the Indian language more quickly, that time had now run out.

The missionaries tried several expedients to continue reaching the Indians: dialect studies, sending Indian children to school in La Cumbre. But the men doing dialect studies had to flee attacks on their lives, and the Indian boys left school to become "wild" again. The lost opportunity, it seemed, could not be recaptured, the Waunana were lost to Mennonite Brethren missions.

Persecution: The End?

Not only in the Choco but in all of Colombia the age-old dragon of persecution was raising its head. At the instigation of local priests, small groups of believers were troubled by "persecution, threats, and the curtailment of many rights. Christians are harassed and seeking ones are intimidated and made faint-hearted."² Schools were closed, visas withheld, churches burned or used for places of entertainment. Some Christians fled to the cities. Others were forced to renounce their faith. When meetings were forbidden, believers met secretly in the bush or in hideouts.

Then came a direct attack on La Cumbre. On July 5, 1956, a hundred persons were listening to a guest band in an auditorium when stones began to hit the roof and break through the windows. Fearing to leave, the audience hid behind furniture or huddled against walls. Little groups of people ventured out into the darkness through side doors and fled through pastures and over fences to their homes. Police were summoned, and the attackers fled at last. But on this night, while rocks were flying, six people came to Christ.

July 8, 2 a.m.: Missionary Ernest Friesen heard footsteps on the corridor of their home. A smell of

gas--somebody ducking behind the cement wall--and while stones began to land on the house, flames leaped up the outside walls. The missionaries fled through a side door to a school building; but looking back, they saw that the flames miraculously were dying out.

While Colombian Christians were being harassed, reports say, the Congo Mennonite Brethren Christians were praying with a map of Colombia spread out before them. No Colombian Mennonite Brethren Christians were killed. In the end, the persecution proved to be a time of cleansing, of proving and testing. Missionary Herman Buller stated the persecution became in fact one of the reasons liberty was later granted:

The testimony of Evangelical Christians, though few in number, has wielded a convincing impact upon the non-Evangelical community. Evangelicals have suffered with patience and love, often sealing their testimony with their blood.³

The persecution was disturbing enough to the small group of Mennonite Brethren. But in Istmina Mrs. Mary Dyck was ill. With her husband John, she boarded a plane to fly to the hospital in Palmira. Travel time was about an hour. Twenty minutes after takeoff, the plane crashed into a jungled, very rough mountain side. The day: March 9, 1957. Missionary Jake Loewen joined a ground search party which reached the spot almost two weeks later. They found no survivors. John and Mary were buried with the others on the mountainside.

The Colombia Mennonite Brethren Conference: Progressing?

Three events of the year 1958 shaped the Mennonite Brethren Church of Colombia: the national elections, the Colombia Mennonite Brethren convention, and a watch-night service in Cali.

At the national elections a new liberty was born for the evangelicals in that the Liberal party came into office and adopted policies more favorable to the evangelical community. As in Brazil, so in Colombia the

strong tides of change have been sweeping away centuries of hostility to the evangelicals, so that the country is now open to the new message. Former rigid restrictions and severe penalties have been relaxed. "Opportunities for evangelism in Colombia abound today. In fact, at times they are literally thrust upon us," wrote Herman Buller in 1961.

The second event of 1958 was the Colombia convention, at which delegates from the Choco and La Cumbre accepted the constitution for the Mennonite Brethren Church of Colombia. (Work on this constitution had begun at an earlier convention in 1953). This meant that the churches were well on the way to forming an indigenous conference, a prelude to the bolder step of becoming self-sufficient and self-propagating.

The third event was a watchnight service in the home of Ernest Friesens, December 31, 1958, in Cali. This city of 700,000 is described by Mrs. Wilmer Quiring:

Neat, modestly-constructed housing areas as well as squalid slums wrap themselves around this mushrooming city. Many go to bed at night hungry and with that empty feeling they can't do anything about. So poorly is the wealth of the country distributed that only one percent of the total population is well-to-do and only one-third claim the distinction of belonging to the middle class.⁴

In this large, troubled city a small handful of Christians met on the last day of 1958 to worship. They continued to meet: and when later on property was bought for a church building, city work in Colombia had begun. Cali has since become the most important Mennonite Brethren center in Colombia.

Vernon Reimer compares the work in Cali to farmers burning away the tall dry grass on mountain slopes: they do not light one fire and wait for it to spread, but light fires in many places. Just so, he says, not one big church but many small churches are being started in Cali. Out of that first watchnight service grew the San Fernando church. Some of the charter members, finding it too far to travel to church there, organized

a new group in the suburb of Popular, in the midst of taverns and dance halls. John Savoia began evangelism in another suburb. Students from the Bible Institute (see p148) helped begin preaching centers in Yumbò and Dagua--both now organized churches. Villa Colombia, begun by Ebner Friesen, now has the largest attendance of all Colombia Mennonite Brethren Churches. Siloe and Union Vivienda Popular grew into congregations, then the "Bible Center" in Maracaibo.

A missionary describes the members of these churches:

In the city most of our members are laborers or factory workers. Some have their own little industry in the home. We have a guitar maker, guitar case maker, shoe maker, baker, photographer, tailor, coffee strainer manufacturer, plus a few salesmen and carpenters. The average wage is from \$50.00 to \$125.00 per month . . . many people do without meat (50¢ a lb. here) and potatoes (5¢ a lb.) most of the week.

Two of the pastors of these congregations are almost completely supported by their group, four receive partial salary from the mission. Six groups have built church buildings constructed of cement bricks and corrugated sheet metal roofs.

Out in the country near La Cumbre, outstations were growing into congregations: Villa Hermosa, San Jose, Cisneros, Dagua. The seven country churches also now have their own pastors as well as a supervisor over all country work. The rural people live on small fincas (farms) and raise corn, coffee, and plaintains. A missionary remarked of them:

Everyone takes advantage of the poor man and he receives very little money for his crops. The rich take everything away from the poor. The people say the situation has to change. The oppressed are "fed up" and underneath the pot is brewing. . . .

It is among the poor of the country and the near-poor of the city, then, that the Mennonite Brethren churches grow. In all, there are some 24 congregations and preaching points in Colombia, including the groups still existing in the Choco (Noanama was the only church to close down) as well as a few new study groups in the city of Medellin. Membership proper is about 650, Sunday school attendance close to 2000. Officers of the Colombia conference are all national brethren.

Concerned with increasing their size, the conference in 1969 chose the theme, "Let Us Rise and Build," and set for the next five years a goal of ten new churches, 2000 new members. Self-direction, however, is a more difficult matter. When the conference was asked to take over responsibility in 1970, one pastor wrote to Ernest Friesen, "We don't even know how to tie our own shoes, and now are to take over everything." The theme of the 1971 convention was more courageous: "An Indigenous Church--Self-supporting, Self-governing, Self-propagating."

Schools: A New Way?

After the primary school in La Cumbre had continued for some twenty years, pressure was brought to bear to add a highschool. But because it was difficult to get qualified secondary teachers or students to come to a rural village, the highschool department was moved to Cali in 1966. The primary school was turned over to nationals, who tried to continue with financial help from the mission until 1969, when the school was discontinued altogether. Colegio Americas Unidas, the highschool, on the other hand, did well and was given government approval for its four-year course. Parents are now requesting the final two years, which would complete the full Colombia highschool curriculum. Enrollment is about 70. The staff is national except for the director, Peter Loewen, and plans are under way to give that post also to a national very soon. About ten Christian Service workers teach in the grade and highschools of Cali.

• The more exciting education thrust is the extension

seminary mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. This was not the first Mennonite Brethren attempt at a Bible school: the first was a small Bible Institute in Cali which existed from 1959-1968, when it merged with the extension seminary. The present United Biblical Seminary of Colombia, as the extension seminary is called, is the joint effort of some eight or nine missions, including the Mennonite Brethren. It operates in four centers: Cali, Medellin, Bogota, and Caribe. The Mennonite Brethren work in the Cali division.

The "octopus," as someone aptly dubbed the school because of its far-reaching arms, uses the four central cities merely as operational headquarters; the school proper is held out in the "field." Cali, for instance, operates up to 21 extension centers, both in the Valle and in the Choco. The students use programmed textbooks to work on their own, meeting periodically with teachers at a nearby center for evaluation, tests, discussion, and the like.

This seminary-on-the-field has two great advantages: 1) students live at home, continue their jobs and support families, make no break with their culture; and 2) the school reaches men and women who are already leaders in their churches, people who can put to immediate use what they learn in their texts. Laymen in particular are eager to learn in order to work in the church. Vernon Reimer, head of the Cali division, remarked on the effect of these classes: "Again and again I have been amazed to see how even a little bit of training will inspire a person, young or old, to serve with greater confidence and enthusiasm."

The next step in the project is what Mr. Reimer calls a "new breed of books," called Intertexts, to replace the stop-gap workbooks now in use. A series of 28 programmed texts is being designed by CLATT (Latin American Committee for Theological Texts) and other committees, intended to form an interlocking set of theological textbooks. The project is inter-denominational as well as international, hence the name "Intertexts." For this purpose Central and South America have been divided into four regions. The first of these books is about to come off the press, and

several others are in advanced stages of preparation. At present the only Mennonite Brethren writer is Vernon Reimer, who is preparing the Church History text. Mr. Reimer also serves as regional secretary of the Greater Colombia area, one of the four divisions mentioned above.

In the past few years between 25 and 45 Mennonite Brethren students have enrolled in the extension seminary each semester.

The Future: An Evangelical National Church?

Like Brazil, Colombia is riding the wave of one of the fastest-growing Protestant communities in the world. It is estimated that between 1948 and 1956 the number of evangelical sympathizers increased from 25,000 to 100,000. When Billy Graham held a united crusade in Cali in 1962, the gymnasium seating 8000 was filled every night, and more than 1600 persons registered decisions to follow Christ. When the Evangelism-in-Depth program was held in 1968, neither politicians nor Catholic leaders opposed it but rather wished the evangelicals well. The evangelicals in turn were careful to tell Catholic churchmen that the crusade would not interfere with celebrations connected with the Pope's visit that year.

Church leaders are asking whether the mass or crusade approach is right for Latin America. A missionary wrote in a letter:

We believe the general feeling is that an evangelistic campaign in a local church brings better results than a united campaign. A mass response at a united campaign does not mean that all of those who have responded are born again. Many times it is just giving assent to what is being said or manifesting a willingness to go with the evangelicals . . . one method with good results is Bible study in the homes and personal evangelism through visitation. Family response many times is the case. If, from the very beginning of our

work here, we would have pushed more for what Dr. McGavaran calls the multi-individual response we might now have a larger membership.

Others disagree with this evaluation, pointing out that mass crusades have the effect of opening up the area for follow-up individual work later. Mennonite Brethren strategy has focused on the small group, friendship evangelism, home Bible studies, and training in extension Bible courses.

A field report assesses the strength and weakness of the Colombia church in this way:

Strong points of our national church are its sound doctrine and genuine faith and trust in the Lord, especially among the leadership. There is very little modernistic tendency here. Also the national conference has set some positive goals for church growth. Many of the believers have a zeal for witnessing. . . .

Our weakness is [lack of] strong national leadership. Many pastors lack self-confidence because of much stress on education. People are looking for leaders with higher secular training. There is need of men who will be accepted as leaders. As far as our Conference organization, committees, commissions, meetings, and etc. is concerned, we are over organized. We have far too much machinery for the small membership. Yet on the local level there is a weakness in the organization of the individual church program.⁵

Carlos Osorio, president of the executive committee of the Colombia conference, agrees that above all, leaders are needed:

There is a need of leaders with secular preparation, that is among the national believers. There is a lack of national lay leaders in the local churches to help in the work in general, such as have ability to help in effective evangelism and in administration. I am here referring to

national lay leaders, not those that are working as missionaries or pastors.⁶

Mr. Hugo Zorrilla, returned to Colombia after study in the U.S., writes, "There is deep concern on the part of the national to begin a movement for the preparation of leaders--whether pastors or no, on a high academic level. Of the few pastors we have, not one has finished high school."⁷

Vernon Reimer points out that the church needs to become independent in other areas as well as leadership:

Greater dependency on the Lord and less on foreign help--personnel and finances--is necessary for progress and rapid growth of Mennonite Brethren in Cali, Colombia.⁸

He adds, "The changes taking place in our work will place much more responsibility upon the national church."

If the goal of the church is lay leadership of its own, then conversely the goal of the missionary is to step aside where possible, permitting the national conference self-direction. "Missionaries only help and advise when they are invited," wrote a worker. Mr. Zorrilla remarked, "I believe the best help the mission can give us is to let the Colombian church arrive at her goals of self-government, self-propagation, and self-support."⁹

When asked what more specific goals the Colombian churches might have in mind, Mr. Zorrilla listed the following:

- to develop a plan and to motivate the young people to continue studying
- to help natural-born leaders in their training
- to use and prepare national values before foreign values
- to ask the Mission Board to help us by sending certain missionaries prepared in specific ministries as music, Christian education, camp programs, etc. These missionaries will come for a limited time . . . to teach and train leaders.

The Colombian church is being launched in times of change--spiritual change in Latin America, economic unrest, change in mission strategy. How can the new church remain stable in such times? To quote Mr. Zorrilla once more:

Oh, that God help us not to "remain stable." The church needs to change and to be of impact in a changing society. History is the judge of how the church has suffered and is powerless in societies that change but the church, with her customs, remains out of focus.¹⁰

To be a flexible, effective, evangelical national church: this is the challenge before the church in Colombia.

FOOTNOTES

¹"Colombia," Lands and People, Vol. VII (New York: Grolier Society, n.d.), p. 99.

²General Conference Yearbook, 1966.

³Herman Buller, Letter, 1970.

⁴Mrs. Wilmer Quiring, Christian Leader, March 17, 1964, p. 7.

⁵Colombia Field Report, December, 1970.

⁶Carlos Osorio, Report to Board of Missions and Services, November, 1970.

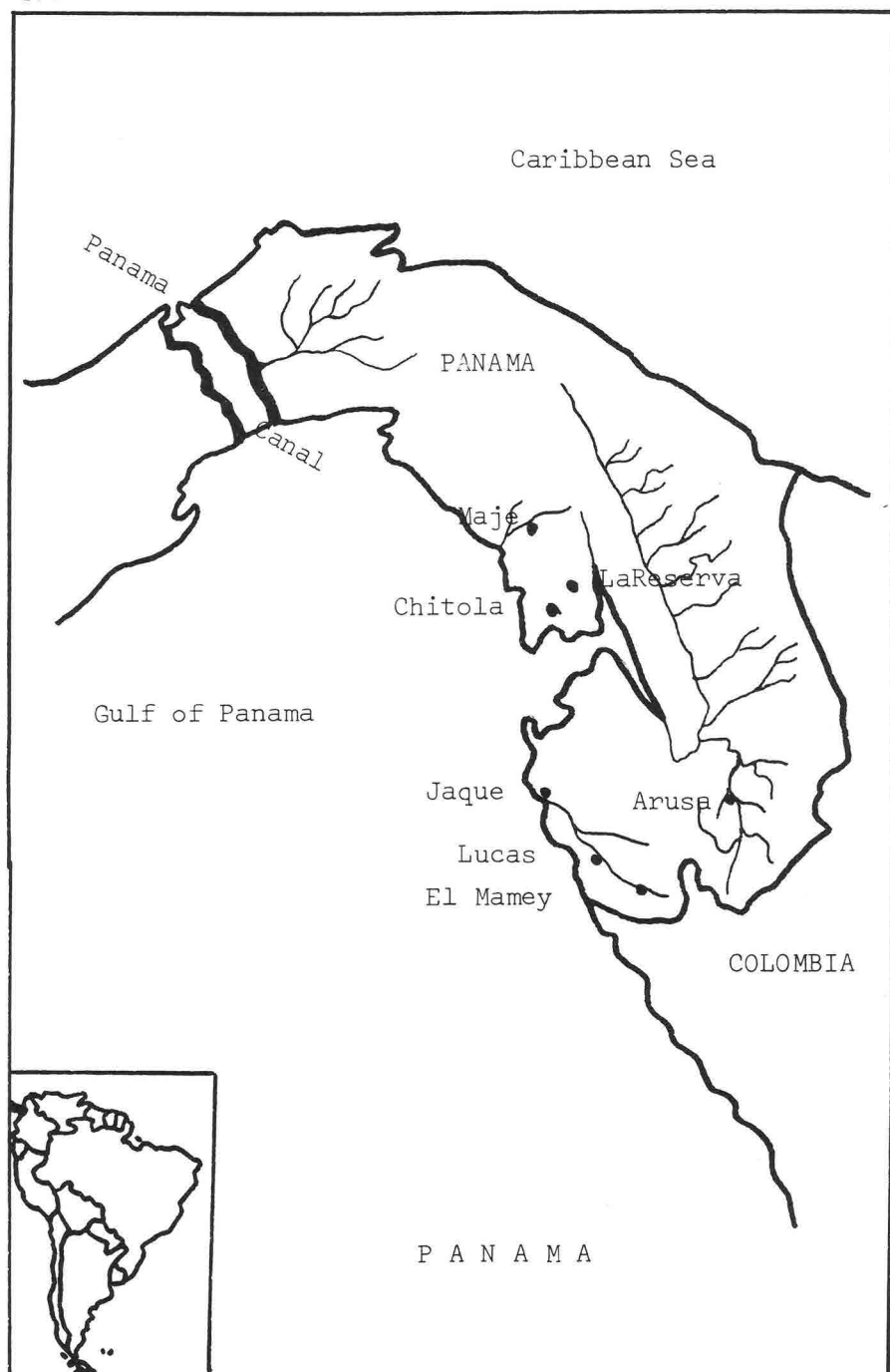
⁷Hugo Zorilla, Letter, 1971.

⁸Vernon Reimer, Christian Leader, September 22, 1970.

⁹Zorilla, op. cit.,

¹⁰Zorilla, op. cit.

For additional reading in Colombian Mennonite Brethren mission work, see Margaret Epp, But God Hath Chosen, the Story of John and Mary Dyck (North Newton, Kansas: Mennonite Press, 1963).



PANAMA: READING EXPERIMENTS
IN RIVER COUNTRY

Down in the far southwestern corner of the Caribbean Sea, a wall of green mountains rises abruptly over coral shores. . . . As one's boat approaches nearer, one can see that every acre of this land is hidden by a canopy of trees. The shoreline, and the little coral islands lying off it, are covered by coconut palms. Mangroves choke the shallow inlets and the low salt-water marshes, standing on stilts in the water. And beyond, dense steaming jungle, intensely alive, writhes up and over the highest of the peaks. It is very quiet and very hot . . . sometimes on the shallow reefs, a solitary Indian may be seen, dark, stocky and almost naked, standing in his canoe with his fish-spear poised to throw, timeless and motionless, like a primitive statue.¹

This is Darien, home of the Choco Indians. Their tambo, or roofed platforms on stilts, are built along the banks of the rivers which wind through the dense jungle; not in villages but set apart, for the Choco Indian prefers isolation. There are perhaps 25,000 of them, speaking ten different dialects. Scattered in small groups across southeastern Panama and northwestern Colombia, they travel back and forth across the border at will, unseen and untracked in the heavy jungles.

Precisely because of these jungle wanderings, the unfinished story of the Waunana, begun in Colombia, is now unfolding in Panama. For when the Waunana in Colombia heard that their former missionary friends were now teaching among the Panama Indians, many "rivers" of the Waunana migrated there and settled in the Chitola area. Among them were three of the students who had once attended La Cumbre.

The incoming Waunana were warmly welcomed by the Christians of the Empera tribe. The first gospel contact with the Empera Indians had been made by the Four-square Mission in 1953, when a missionary came with

records of Bible stories in their language. In 1956 Jake Loewen arrived in the course of a study of all Choco dialects. By the next year a translation of 25 Bible stories in 9 dialects was ready, and Glenn Prunty of New Tribes Mission, a resident of Jacque, read the stories to the Indians in his area. When the Indians heard the Bible stories in their own language, they said, "Now we know what you want to say to us!" And in Jacque over 150 Indians came to Christ.

At this point the Mennonite Brethren workers decided to try a summer reading course. This approach--missions via the teaching of reading--is in fact Panama's unique and highly successful donation to the history of Mennonite Brethren missions. David Wirsche and Jake Loewen had to write their own primers, using Spanish letters so that the Indians would later be able to read Spanish also. The experiment went well. Ten Indians entered the reading program in the summer of 1959; they learned to read the 25 Bible stories, and two went on to read Spanish. The missionaries continued those summer reading classes, until in a few years the Indians became able to conduct a year-round literacy program of their own.

Aureliano Zabagura, an advanced reader, suggested that he visit the United States. He was so profoundly impressed with the Christian fellowship he found there that at once he made plans for establishing churches back in Panama. In the summer of 1961, when the Wirsches and Jake Loewen arrived to follow up an earlier reading experiment, they found that Aureliano and his Empera Indians had nearly finished a chapel in El Mamey.

The congregation chose Aureliano as their pastor and appointed another educated member to teach in Lucas. A year later, forty people in Lucas could read and another chapel was ready for dedication. Meanwhile the El Mamey Christians were communicating the gospel to the Waunana who had come in from Colombia, 25 of whom decided "to walk on God's road." Some Spanish-speaking people were also baptized by the Indians.

The churches--Chitola (Waunana Indians), Lucas and El Mamey (Empera Indians), and the Spanish-speaking Negro church in Jacque begun by the Indians--are now

preparing for incorporation as the Iglesia Evangelica Unida, or United Evangelical Church. The Panama church will by its own choice be associated with the Mennonite Brethren. The first conference leader will be Chindia Pena, an Empera, son of a witch doctor and one of the students who once attended La Cumbre school.

That first contact with the Waunana in Colombia has not only continued in Panama--it has boomeranged. Waunana Christians have gone back to visit their territory in Colombia, and some Colombian Indians have evidently been converted, if one may judge by the report of a French anthropologist who stated that she had seen a marked change in the lives of the Colombian Indians.

The lives of the Panama Indians have also changed. People in town remark, "The Indians at Chitola--they are so different!" One woman said, "I loved to grab other women by the hair and beat them . . . but today there is peace in my heart . . . I have peace with God and my neighbors."²

The work in Panama is unique in that the Indians do almost everything themselves. Missionaries come for the summer only. An Indian who learns to read immediately teaches another Indian. Believers choose their own leaders and decide whom to baptize. When a large group of Indians gathered in Jacque recently, Indians from other areas invited the Chitola Christians to come and preach to them; whereupon the Chitola Christians of their own accord took it upon themselves to go up these rivers with the gospel.

Even in translating the Bible the usual pattern of missionary translator plus national helper has been upset. In Panama the believers themselves are doing the translating. Last year the whole Chitola group was involved in traslating the book of Mark into Waunana; even the older, uneducated people discussed and contributed. "They show a remarkable insight that astounds you," said missionary David Wirsche. A manuscript thus produced, of course, goes through checking by experts and rechecking by the Indian group itself before it is printed. The end result is a live, idiomatic translation; and perhaps more important, a tremendous impetus comes to the church in that the people feel that they

themselves have been able to translate the Word and thus make it their own.

The book of Mark, as translated by the church and written down by Chindia Pena, is now finished and available in the Empera dialect. Chindia has gone on to translate the book of Acts, and a set of readers is ready for use.

The approach in Panama agrees with certain principles set out by Dr. Eugene Nida for working in a folk or face-to-face society.³

1. Effective communication is based on personal friendship. "The important thing in Panama," said David Wirsche, "has been to sit down and meet the people at their level, to talk about all their problems whether marital, children, or where to find food." Mrs. Wirsche, finding that her prepared lessons were having little effect, began talking to the women and discovered that they wanted to learn to sew. She began a sewing class. Everyone came, everyone talked, and she was able to present Christ to them in ordinary conversation.

The Choco are friendly; they are a people "small of stature and big of heart," says David Wirsche, adding, "Who else would move a whole family out of their house at one o'clock at night so that the missionary would have a place to stay?"

2. The missionary should first approach those who can communicate the message to their own family group. Pastor Aureliano, for example, upon seeing a group of new Indians would invariably address the oldest man and impress on him the responsibility of showing his people the way of God. The Indian would respond at once, saying that he was ready but that he was ignorant, he did not know the way--could someone teach him the way of God? Whereupon Aureliano would arrange for a visit to that area of the river.

3. Time must be allowed for the message to diffuse. Since missionaries could come only in summer, some felt the message would die out. Not so. Instead, it had time to spread internally through the group. In this kind of society neither group nor leader will easily step out independently: leader and group must act together if faith is to be strong and decisive.

4. The challenge for changes in belief and action must be addressed to those socially responsible for making such decisions. Accordingly, when David Wirsche wished to teach the Lucas Indians to read, he approached the chief, saying that the missionaries were at his orders to teach whomsoever the chief would appoint to be taught. Working under such direction was often frustrating; Mr. Wirsche wrote:

Sometimes there was reading during the day, sometimes there was reading only during the evening or afternoons. Again at times . . . the Indians would practice reading until midnight . . . and the results of this unscheduled and apparently disorganized literacy program was that in eight days twenty-four individuals were taught to read. Of these, six attained the Bible story reading level.⁴

The result of this approach has been a strong, completely Indian church. Worship and faith patterns are their own. For example, the Indians meet every Saturday and Sunday for a two-day informal round of singing, reading instruction, Bible reading and testimony, hunting for meat and playing of games. This relaxed fellowship has taken the place of their former drinking orgies. At meetings, anyone may be permitted to speak. Aureliano once asked a notorious witch doctor who was present to say something. "I know that I do not belong with you," said the man, "but I am convinced that the gospel is true. You all know the involvements (with the hai, spirits) which keep me from following God's way." To which Aureliano answered, "Yes, we know, brother, and we will pray that God will help you find the way."⁵

The strength of the Panama church, says missionary Wirsche, is the healing, cleansing, therapeutic process which takes place when the believers meet. "They know how to get together; they know how to confess their sins; they know how to pray one for another," he said. To share in this process the foreign missionary must also be open; he is not a teacher nor spiritual father

so much as simply one who shares.

The Panama Christians are rejoicing over release from the fear of the spirits which formerly dominated their lives. One Indian remarked, "When the Spirit of God watches my house, the devils can't even come there."⁶ Because their thinking is so thoroughly spirit-oriented, they have no difficulty believing in the Holy Spirit and His power on earth. Indeed, they reproach the missionaries for lack of faith. Jake Loewen tells of going to pray over the sick wife of Pastor Aureliano, together with several Indian brethren. But when the next prayer session took place, the missionaries were not invited. "We could not take you along, said Aureliano after some questioning, "because you two do not believe."⁷

The minutes of a Board of Missions and Services consultation on Panama, dated August 1970, indicate possible future plans. The schools and churches which have been established in Lucas and El Mamey are to be put into good condition, under the supervision of Glenn Prunty, who will also oversee the medical work. Most expenses for this renovation will be paid by local agencies or churches. The three Indians who will be ready for secondary school at the end of 1971 will, it is hoped, receive scholarships for further schooling in La Palma. The government has agreed that Indians may be certified as educational promoters, so that these men can then go back into educational work among their own people.

Dick Scott of Four Square Mission will continue translating the New Testament into Empera. Missionary John Goertz may be asked to become full-time coordinator of the Panama work, although the national church should be able to take on responsibility for teaching the Bible to its members and for literacy work.

The Panama government is so gratified by the success among the Waunana and Empera Indians that it has several times asked the Mennonite Brethren missionaries to assume wider responsibility for other tribes. The answer to this request remains to be decided by the Mennonite Brethren church of the future.

FOOTNOTES

¹David Howarth, Panama (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1966), p. 3.

²Jacob A. Loewen, "The Church Among the Choco of Panama," Practical Anthropology, Vol. 10, No. 3 (May-June, 1963), p. 101.

³Loewen, op. cit., p. 97.

⁴David Wirsche quoted by Jacob A. Loewen, "Good News for the Waunana," Practical Anthropology, Vol. 8, No. 6 (Nov.-Dec., 1961), p. 5.

⁵Loewen, op. cit., p. 102.

⁶Loewen, op. cit., p. 102.

⁷A. J. Klassen (ed.), The Church in Mission (Hillsboro, Kansas: Mennonite Brethren Board of Christian Literature, 1967), p. 292.



PERU: THE JUNGLE

"The Campa (Ashaninca) Indians live chiefly along the long, crooked stretches of rivers coming down from the Andes foothills," wrote missionary Paul Friesen on a tour of Campa territory. The 20,000 Campas of the remote jungle areas around the Ucayali, Perene, Tambo, Lower Urubamba, Ene, and Apurimac rivers must be visited by boat and on foot. They are 95% illiterate; few have radios or other communication with the outside world.

Some ten missionaries from the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite Brethren (merged in 1960) have gone to these Campa Indians. There is no distinct Mennonite Brethren church or conference. The missionaries work in cooperation with the Wycliffe Bible Translators, who operate a jungle base in Yarina Cocha. Yet these ten missionaries have played a decisive part in the forming of the Campa Church and of the Spanish-speaking national church in Atalaya.

When the Sylvester Dirks went to Peru in 1950 to begin a new work for the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference, they acquired from the government a 220-acre tract of land near Atalaya, a town due east the capital city, Lima. They named their station "El Encuentro," "The Meeting," not only because the Tambo and Urubamba rivers joined near by but because they envisioned the meeting of Indian people with Jesus Christ. Mr. Dirks describes the early years at El Encuentro:

The couple lived at first in a native style house built exclusively out of jungle materials. The one-room structure served not only as living quarters for the family but as a place of assembly on the Lord's Day. The ministry began there in the Spanish language as it were Spanish-speaking neighbors who were the first to come. Scared by the measles epidemic which hit the area and their own household eight days after they first arrived, the Campas avoided all contact with the "viracocha," "white man" for the first six months. To induce the local people to come and settle on mission

property an agriculture project was launched. This involved the clearing of land, putting up of fences, planting and harvesting of crops. Cattle, pigs and chickens were raised and this solved a constantly recurring food problem for the missionaries. At the same time it provided employment for the Indians and proved financially helpful to them. El Encuentro soon turned out to be a sanctuary for run-away slaves. These were welcomed and defended against unscrupulous exploitation.¹

The Dirks also opened a general store and a clinic. Since the multiple duties allowed no time for the linguistic work and translation for which the Dirks had especially prepared, their main emphasis at this time was evangelism. Mrs. Dirks needed also to teach her three children their grade school work.

During the next ten years other missionaries came: the Joe Walters, the John Toews, and the Paul Friesens. The Walters and Toews worked with Spanish speaking people around Atalaya, the Friesens and Dirks with the Indians. By this time El Encuentro had become, as Mr. Dirks put it, a "buzzing place."

For some years already we had maintained an airstrip for missionary planes. It served as a refueling place and over-night stop for missionaries serving jungle Indians south of us toward Cuzco and east toward the Brazilian border. At certain seasons of the year we would have two and even three planes stop in a single day. . . . Aviation and communication go together and so El Encuentro became famous too as a weather station. We reported daily to Yarina Cocha, Wycliffe's base of operations, and were required to stand by with weather whenever any of their planes were in the area. . . .²

Meanwhile the work of linguistics and Bible translation was becoming urgent. To get away from station duties, the Dirks moved to Tournavista, where their

children now attended school. They spent several years reducing the highly inflected Campa language to writing and in translating the Gospel of John into the Campa idiom.

By 1964 it was becoming clear that neither the church at El Encuentro nor the Atalaya church needed foreign missionaries any longer. A salaried pastor, Juan Rios, was in charge at Atalaya (the partial salary he still receives from the mission will be discontinued by the end of 1973), and the congregation is now rebuilding a larger sanctuary entirely on their own. The Campa church too had its own recognized leader.

Mr. Dirks therefore spent his time in field trips and further Bible translation at Yarina Cocha with Mr. Kindberg, the Wycliffe man who was chiefly responsible for putting the Scripture into the Campa language. The Walters went to Pucallpa, where Joe was placed in charge of the Evangelism-In-Depth program. The Friesens are now assisting in the Bible Institute of the Swiss Indian Mission near Pucallpa; Paul gives special help to the 10 or 15 Campa students enrolled. The Toews had returned home because of illness. According to Paul Friesen in a March, 1971 report, the station El Encuentro no longer exists.

The local church at El Encuentro is going on, however, though it is neither large nor vigorous. Mr. Dirks writes:

It is encouraging though to see how the leading brother has for a long time made regular visits to neighboring communities with the purpose of sharing with them what he knows and loves--the message of Jesus in song and word. Even more thrilling is the fact that many of the young men of El Encuentro mission are out elsewhere as teachers and pastors, the most important community leaders of Campaland. Today the name of Jesus is known and sung in a dozen or more places on the Tambo and Ene Rivers.³

According to Paul Friesen, 85% or more of the present number of Campa believers are directly the

result of the Campas' own ministry to the tribes. He attributes the steady growth and development of the Campa church to five factors:

1. The training of bilingual teachers. They go to new communities to teach not only reading and writing, but the Word of God in the people's own language. There are now over 25 schools taught by these men.

2. The ministry of young men taught in these bilingual schools. They are often able to take over leadership in the worship services.

3. The translation of the Scripture into the Campa language. A revised translation will be completed by the end of 1971.

4. Training of pastors and evangelists in the Swiss Indian Mission Bible School near Pucallpa. Of the 20 who have attended so far, 10 are in active ministry in their communities.

5. Formation of the "Iglesia Evangelica Ashaninca" or Campa Evangelical Church. In October, 1968, a group of Bible School students and believers signed the charter declaring their existence as a church and accepting responsibility for carrying on their own worship services and for evangelizing their tribe.⁴

One other area besides linguistics-translation and teaching has attracted the attention of the missionaries: economic development. The Campas, being somewhat passive, have been pushed into small areas by the aggressive Quechua-tribes, and the Campa men are now forced to go to work for Peruvian plantation owners, lumber workers, rubber gatherers, and those who wash gold. They often fall into the sins of camp life, while their wives and families are left vulnerable at home. Furthermore the Communists appear to be working in the jungles to recruit men for guerilla warfare, with the intention of driving out the white men. The solution to both problems seems to be the establishment of a stable economy in the home area.

The agriculture project set up by Sylvester Dirks soon after his arrival continued for a time, then fell into disuse. Now an experimental farm is being conducted at the Yarina Cocha base, where Indians are being trained to bring agricultural information and

methods to their people. A Mennonite Brethren couple, the Lamont Schmidts, worked for a time at this farm. "The aim is not to take the Indian from the jungle, but to take the jungle from the Indian," said Mr. Schmidt; it is "to offer him a chance to settle down to normal family life with crop rotations offering him security in the way of food, thereby negating the necessity to roam the jungles. . . ."5

Thus in one way and another the Campa Indians are learning to help themselves to find a new life and a new faith. To quote Mr. Dirks once more:

We have lived to see the Lord call out from among the Campas a people for His Name. The thing is glorious and marvelous before our eyes!6

FOOTNOTES

¹Sylvester Dirks, Report to J. J. Toews, 1970.

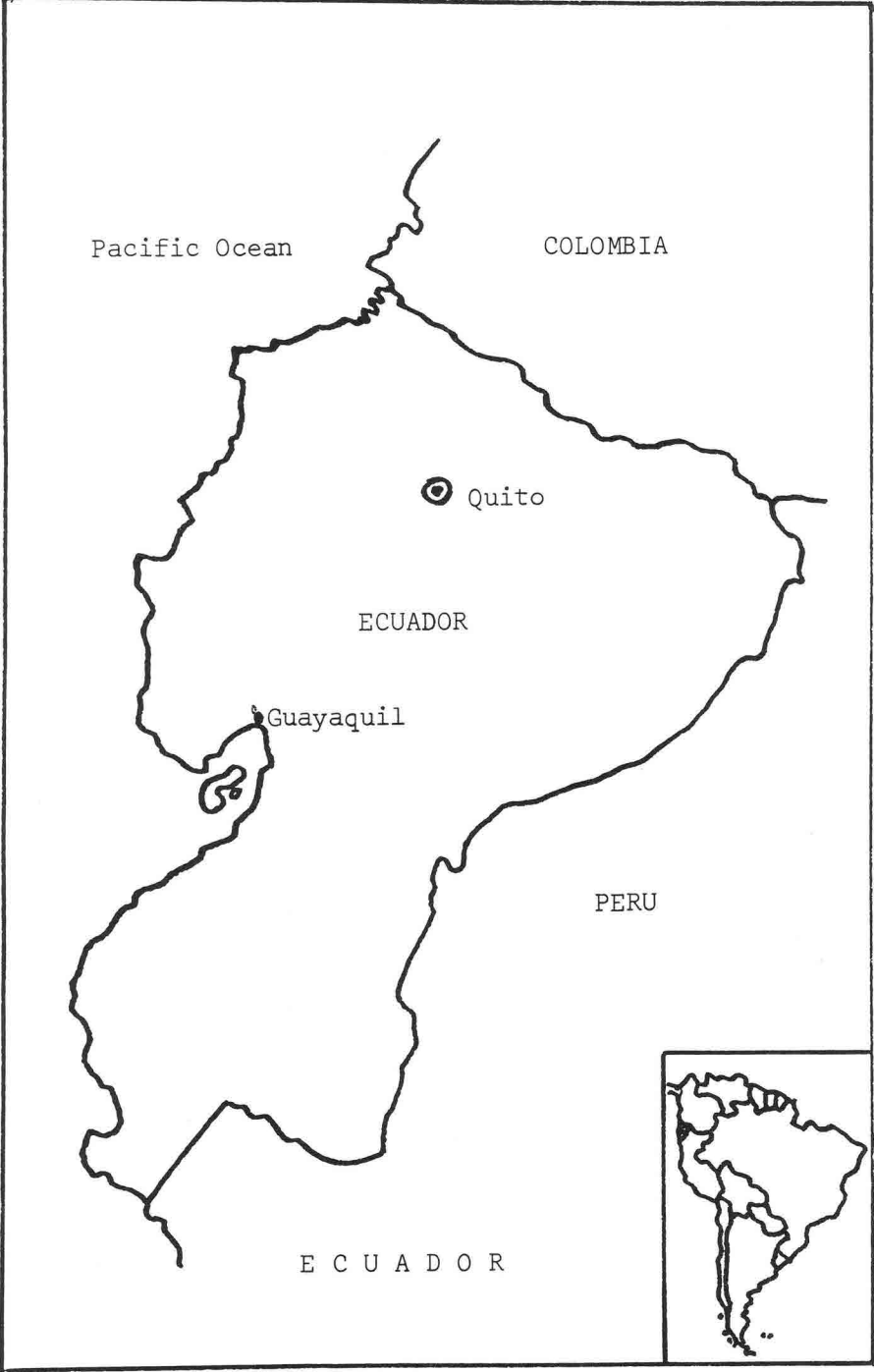
²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Paul Friesen, Report to Phyllis Martens, March, 1971.

⁵Lamont Schmidt, Christian Leader, October 18, 1968, p. 9.

⁶Dirks, op. cit.



ECUADOR: OVER THE AIR

On Christmas Day, 1930, at 4 p.m. a voice on the air said for the first time, "This is the Voice of the Andes, radio station HCJB. . . ."

HCJB (Heralding Christ Jesus' Blessings) is one of the oldest radio stations in Latin America, a country where over 35 million people have radio receivers. The first studio was a rebuilt sheep shed, transmitting on a power of 400 watts. Now this great missionary radio station has 375,000 watts and beams the gospel in all directions 24 hours a day, in 14 languages.

The German department began when Otto Seidlitz, once treasurer in Martin Niemoeller's church, fled persecution in Germany and took refuge in Ecuador. In 1941 he started the German programs of HCJB. Twelve years later the Mennonite Brethren were asked to take over the department and have been in charge ever since. The David Nightingales went out first. Later workers are Sally Schroeder, Mary Wiens, Anne Kornelsen, Peter Hueberts, and H. C. Borns. All Mennonite Brethren are connected with the radio work since there is neither Mennonite Brethren field nor church in Ecuador.

The German program finds listeners in Germany, to be sure; but surprisingly, many more in Latin America itself. The response especially from Santa Catarina (a Brazilian state settled by German people) is so heavy that David Nightingales eventually left broadcasting to tour in that state and settle down in Joinville, Brazil in hope of beginning a church.

Even in the more remote areas of Santa Catarina, Brazil, where the German Mennonite Brethren conference has six missionary couples, HCJB carries such influence that, as J. J. Toews wrote, "In every place HCJB plays a significant part in generating interest for the Gospel and opening the door for the ambassador of Jesus Christ."¹

Rev. Toews found great interest also in the Mennonite colonies of Paraguay and Brazil.

One of these listening areas is Loma Plata (Menno

Colony, Paraguay), where I spoke two evenings. The church was over-filled and the congregation of almost 1,000 listened breathlessly to the tape-recorded greetings which I had brought from HCJB . . . the offering (for HCJB) amounted to over \$120. . . .²

While the European listeners are for the most part amateur radio operators who want to catch a South American broadcast and who are interested in Latin American music, news, and cultural items, the letters received also indicate a response to the Bible messages. One letter read:

It was just during the Easter week when I needed to hear something about Jesus Christ because I have not wanted to hear anything about Him for a long time. . . . Through all these experiences I have become sick and unable to work, and am bound to a wheel chair, unable to earn my living. I can't read the Polish language, and there are no German books here. God has been too hard on me, and has punished me too hard and through these things I have become a bad person. I would ask you to write me that my soul might find peace in God.³

There are also reports that Mennonite families returning to original Mennonite areas in south Russia listen to HCJB and invite their friends to listen.

Programs in Russian are also released over HCJB four times weekly, as well as over Trans-World Radio in Monte Carlo. Tours into the Soviet Union by Trans-World Radio personnel indicate that the Russian releases reach an audience of millions. The Russian programs are produced by the Mennonite Brethren Gospel Light Hour staff in Winnipeg.

German releases since September, 1969, number
42 per week:

Two half-hours daily programs to Europe
Two half-hour programs daily to South America
One program daily simultaneously to North and
South America.

The German programs are variously geared for children, women, youth, the aged. Three are cultural, the others religious. A breakdown of the thousands of letters received per year shows an average of 400 from Europe behind the Iron Curtain, 1900 from Western Europe, and a sizeable 6000 from South America.

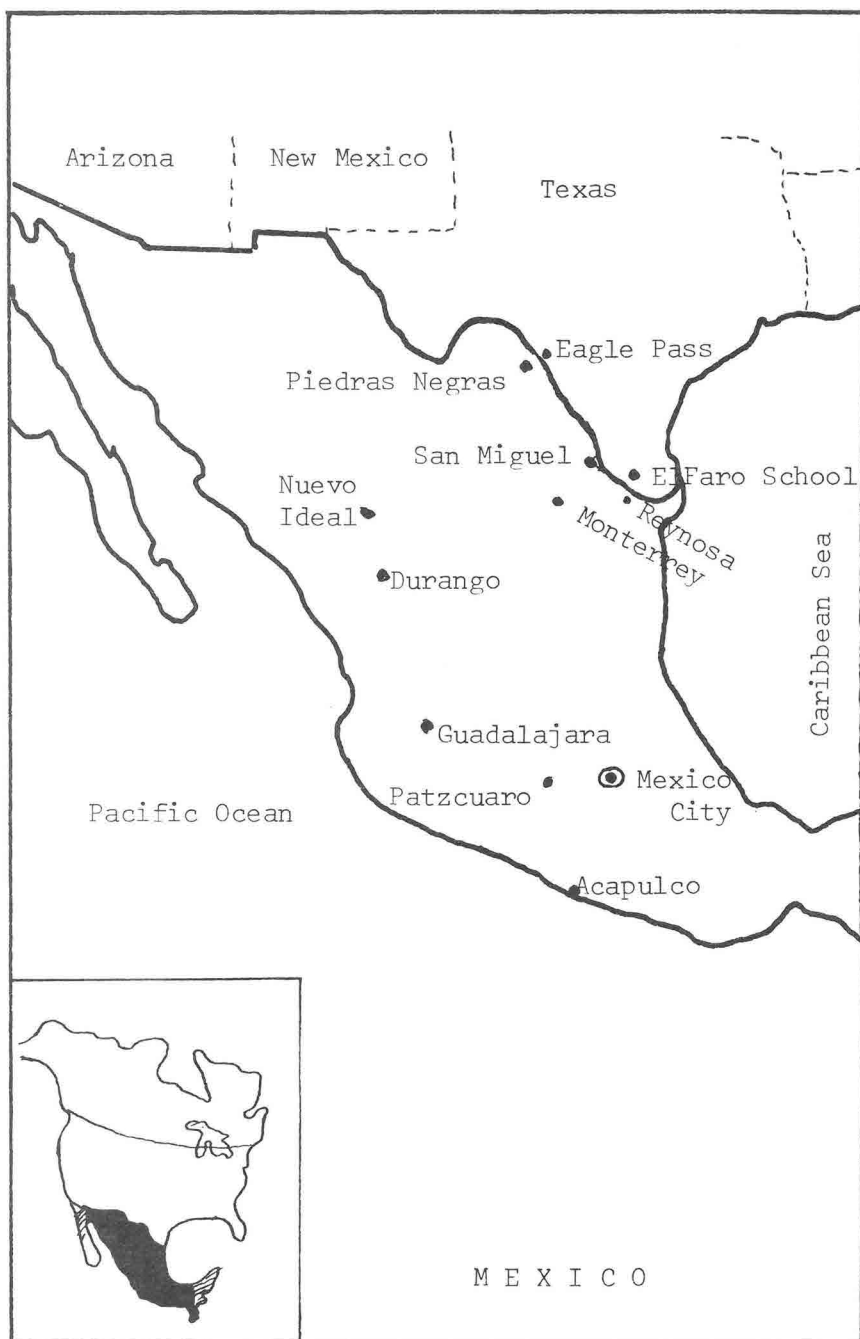
Mission subsidy for the German program goes for personnel and part of the literature and follow-up work. HCJB provides free air time and much of the overhead cost. Missions subsidy for the Russian programs is \$1100 a month.

FOOTNOTES

¹J. J. Toews, Christian Leader, October 7, 1969, p. 10.

²Ibid.

³Christian Leader, July 29, 1958, p. 8.



MEXICO: LAND OF THE SUN

. . . contrast between cactus-covered plains and awe-inspiring mountains; narrow, bumpy streets and wide, beautiful boulevards; late model cars and small donkeys. This is the land where flowers are more important than cars; where sun and seasons, rather than the clock rule man; and where the noon-day siesta is more important than another business transaction.¹

It is easy to enter Mexico, but difficult to stay: to become a permanent resident, a foreigner must have lived there five years. To preach the gospel is also both easy and difficult: easy in that Mexico has religious freedom within the walls or fence surrounding a church building, difficult in that centuries of a rigid Catholicism have closed the ears of the people.

At first, it was concern for the colony of Sommerfelder Mennonites who had migrated from Canada to Mexico, whose closed community in Nuevo Ideal, Durango, had sunk to a very low moral and spiritual level, that brought the Mennonite Brethren to Mexico. But the rigid religious system of the colony made it impossible to preach effectively within the colony. For this reason, and also because the Mexican government forbade entry by missionaries but would allow entrance to farmers, the Mission Board bought a farm at Nuevo Ideal with the understanding that colony Mennonites could be hired to work it.

David Toews, missionary there, soon discovered that whereas the colonists were very slow to respond, the Mexican people were eager to hear his message. At Christmas, 1952, for example, the missionaries found a few Mexican Protestants in Nuevo Ideal who begged that services be held. The missionaries hesitated to start work in this direction, but at length consented to meet once a week to sing. Simple Bible studies were added, and a church came into being.

Since then, evangelism in Mexico has concentrated on the Spanish-speaking people. Various approaches or experiments have been tried. These are, in roughly chronological order:

1. A clinic, largely maternity, in Nuevo Ideal: later discontinued.

2. A Bible Institute in Nuevo Ideal. Students preached in outlying districts every Sunday and during vacations. This national-to-national outreach was the most successful approach and the time of biggest returns, said one of the missionaries. However the school was closed in 1958 because the missionaries then on the field did not have appropriate visas.

3. House-to-house visitation and tract distribution in town and cities, for example in Durango and Monterrey.

4. V.B.S. and evangelistic campaigns: somewhat limited success.

5. Bible study groups in homes in the city: a preferred method.

6. Short-term Bible Institutes in churches.

7. Films--a very popular approach. Billy Graham films in Spanish and others have been shown to thousands in Guadalajara alone. Churches announcing films had standing room only. The M.B. library had 16 Spanish prints.

Out of these efforts grew eight groups of believers with good potential. They organized as a conference in 1956, met once a year, and set up projects such as operating their own conference administration and supporting a conference evangelist. Missionaries were to serve as advisers.

In the 1960's however the Mexico work came to something of a standstill, caught perhaps in the cross-currents of mission-church relationships. Missionary Eugene Janzen felt that the mission was not ready for the change: "I believe that Mexico brought us up short before the truth of ourselves. . . . Everything was on schedule but we failed to read our cue cards correctly." Dan Petker remarked, "Confusion over mission policies and national initiative led to discouragement among the congregations in Mexico. Other confusions have entered in, such as the surge to the cities, where the country-bred people feel displaced and alien." National feeling was strong. The attitude of the Mexican congregations

was, according to Mr. Petker, "We appreciate your help, but let us work--let us make our own decisions. That which we receive, we wish to receive with dignity."

For one reason and another, then, the missionaries withdrew from Mexico, and the Mexican churches took over their own direction and future. However, with the withdrawal of funds, the churches found it impractical to meet for yearly conferences since they live far distant from each other and travel is costly. Some groups are continuing successfully, though independently.

Pastor I.M. Alaniz, for example, has a church of some 100 members in Piedras Negras. This man was already a Christian when he became acquainted with the Mennonite Brethren, and being attracted to their methods and doctrine, he requested membership and the privilege of working under the mission board. During the 1954 flood his church building was ruined, as were the homes of his church members--many families in the town lost their possessions under 18 inches of mud. Pastor Alaniz surveyed the ruins of his church and immediately began plans to rebuild it. Pastor Alaniz publishes books, articles and tracts, shows Christian films, carries on regular home visitation ministries and radio broadcasts as funds permit.

Anatalio Amaya, a Tarascan Indian, is serving a group of believers in Michoacan. Amaya once survived an auto accident in which twelve of the fifteen passengers were killed. He came to Christ in his youth, then through contact with David Cooper he attended the Bible school in Nuevo Ideal. He returned home to serve a small church, partially supporting himself by selling fish.

Miguel Casas leads a small group of believers which meets in his home in Reynosa. He also operates a religious bookstore in his home. German Contreras, a graduate of the Nuevo Ideal Bible Institute, is working as pastor in San Miguel de Camargo, near by.

Sylvester Dirks, visiting Mexico in 1970, remarked that the large foreign-subsidized church buildings in Ciudad Diaz Ordas and Piedras Negras were out of proportion to the small groups gathering for worship, whereas the home-based congregation in Reynosa showed

signs of being a fine indigenous work. He stated further that the hope of Mexico was the training of national leaders.²

Though Mexico has never had a widespread awakening to the gospel because of strong opposition, 1971 shows promise of harvest, says missionary Dan Petker. Other groups have found consistent response to their efforts. The Evangelism-In-Depth program in progress during 1971 in Mexico has the cooperation of many missionaries, the focus of which is Mexico City. Many different groups and individuals have long been contributing factors in laying the groundwork for a large scale awakening in Mexico. For example, radio: an Old Mennonite broadcast, Back to the Bible Broadcast; literature distribution, films ministries, correspondence courses and the many small Bible institutes existing all over Mexico are further preparing people to receive the Good News.

At the present the Mennonite Brethren effort consists of the endorsement of one couple, the Richard Wienses, who returned to Guadalajara independently to continue our experiments in missions and one nurse, Maria Schulz in Nuevo Ideal, Durango.

The future may see a reevaluation of the Mexico work. Until then, to quote Sylvester Dirks,

Now as possibly never before, we need to uphold the many small companies of believers and their leaders scattered across the vast stretches of desert wastes.³

FOOTNOTES

¹John Ratzlaff, Christian Leader, February 20, 1962, p. 6.

²Sylvester Dirks, Christian Leader, July 14, 1970. p. 8.

³Ibid.

